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ABSTRACT

This report is described as a detailed account of the history and development of the Metropolitan Applied Research Center (MARC) Academic Achievement Plan (AAP), describing the process and events which lead to its failure. The AAP is described as a blueprint for a system of educational changes to be developed and implemented by the Board of Education of Washington, D.C. and its staff. It is stated that it provides clear goals and objectives for the school system (grades one to nine) and outlines what must be done if the goals are to be reached. Specific recommendations of the report included the following: (1) proclamation of a reading mobilization year for the entire school system; (2) creation of reading and mathematics mobilization teams in every school; (3) establishment of minimum required levels in reading and mathematics for every grade level; (4) organization of heterogeneous classrooms on a systemwide basis; (5) establishment of an evaluation and testing program; (6) development of supports for teachers in the form of tutors (adult and student), teacher aides, mobilization teams, and staff development programs; (7) development of a system of differentiated staffing; (8) parent involvement in the educational process; and, (9) elimination of impediments to learning and the motivation of students through new techniques. (Author/JM)

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A POSSIBLE REALITY--ABORTED:

The Academic Achievement Project of the District of Columbia Schools

by

ELEANOR FARRAR

with an INTRODUCTION by KENNETH B. CLARK

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PREFACE

The Academic Achievement Project (AAP) was originally developed by a MARC task force headed by Kenneth B. Clark. I had the privilege of being a member of that group and of participating in the process which translated research, experience and convictions into a design for academic excellence. Jeannette Hopkins, at that time a MARC vice president and senior editor at Harper and Row, played a critical role throughout the development, writing and publication of the AAP.

The task of trying to assist the Board of Education and the school administration with the implementation of the design --which was difficult at best--was made infinitely easier by the presence and active involvement of the late Frank Reeves. He helped to keep open lines of communication with the educational establishment, the teachers union, public officials and community groups. His wise counsel has been sorely missed in the preparation of this report.

The contributions of some other individuals in the writing of A Possible Reality - Aborted are gratefully acknowledged. Pauline Schneider, my long time associate at MARC, could almost be described as co-author, having spent days writing and rewriting various sections of this report. Jim Lyons' informed comments and criticism were invaluable. Mary Strong, as editor, contributed immeasurably to coherence, concepts and style.

Even though I think that the analysis represents the views of most of the MARC staff who were involved in the Academic Achievement Project, the final version is my own interpretation of what happened.

Eleanor Farrar

June 1975
Washington, D.C.

INTRODUCTION: AN EPITAPH

Five years may be either a very short period of time or an eternity, depending on one's predicament. It has been five years since the Metropolitan Applied Research Center (MARC) designed and submitted a plan to raise the academic achievement of the pupils of the Washington, D.C. public schools. Eleanor Farrar, formerly vice president of MARC and director of the MARC Washington office and at present vice president of the Joint Center for Political Studies, has written a detailed report of the history and development of the MARC Academic Achievement Plan. Her report, which follows, describes the process and events leading to the defeat of this plan.

MARC decided to undertake this project, to seek the necessary funds and to mobilize its resources for the following reasons:

- The problem of improving the quality of education in American urban public school systems was and still is one of the most significant domestic problems which a dynamic, democratic society cannot continue to ignore.

- It was clear at that time that Mrs. Anita Allen, president of the board, and the majority of the members of the Washington, D.C. Board of Education were genuinely concerned with developing and implementing an effective educational program for the children in the Washington, D.C. public schools.

- It was believed that with a newly elected school board and the necessity for selecting a new superintendent of schools, the Washington public schools would be an ideal laboratory for implementing and testing an academic achievement plan.

- MARC saw this invitation as an opportunity to bring together, to articulate, and to test its many ideas and projects related to the improvement of the quality of education for the children in urban public school systems throughout the nation.

For these and other reasons, MARC's Board of Directors and staff decided to make the Washington, D.C. Academic Achievement Project the dominant MARC activity in the 1970-71 year. MARC accepted the invitation of the Board of Education of Washington, D.C. primarily because it was challenged by the opportunity to demonstrate that it was possible to raise the academic achievement of minority group children by accepting them, by respecting them, and by teaching them with the same efficiency as one would educate more privileged children in our society.

Dr. Eleanor Farrar describes in detail and with disturbing accuracy the many problems and factors which resulted in the failure of the Washington, D.C. community to implement this plan. What follows here are my personal reflections and thoughts concerning the reasons for the failure of this project. In writing this summary I make no claims to scientific objectivity. I have no desire to reopen old wounds and controversies. My major concern is to share my personal observations and feelings with individuals and groups who still have hope and who might still be serious about the need to develop a sound, solid and realistic program for increasing the efficiency of the Washington public schools and raising the academic achievement of the children who are required to attend these schools.

I certainly hope that these thoughts will stimulate others to profit from past mistakes, and to develop more effective, more realistic programs. Above all, it is imperative that the children who are attending the Washington, D.C. public schools should not continue to be doomed to the social and human consequences of the pervasive inefficiency of these schools. These educationally retarded children are human beings. They are not expendable.

In looking back upon the five years of educational failure and in seeking to understand the reasons for this chronic, pervasive and increasing inefficiency and academic retardation which dominate the Washington, D.C. public schools, one is confronted with a number of interrelated factors which cannot be ignored. Among the most disturbing and stark of these are:

1. The ambiguity, vacillation and equivocation of the superintendent of schools who was selected by the board after it adopted the MARC plan were most critical. During the selection process it was understood that the Academic Achievement Plan would provide the educational design and goals within which the new superintendent of schools would be interviewed and selected. The majority of the board who selected the new superintendent had every reason to believe that he not only understood the total pattern of the educational plan--its assumptions, procedures, related programs, objectives and goals--but agreed with it.

   However, very soon after accepting the position of superintendent of schools, he began to raise questions concerning the premises, the feasibility and the realism of the MARC plan. For example, he questioned the fundamental assumption that the children attending the public schools were "normal" children; and he stated that one could not expect them to perform at grade level in such basic skills as reading and arithmetic. In spite of these publicly

expressed reservations, the superintendent of schools did not and was not required to submit a more "realistic" plan to raise the academic achievement of the pupils in the public schools.

2. The teachers union in Washington contributed to the failure of the Academic Achievement Plan by its sustained objections to those components of the plan which required new approaches to training, supervision, evaluation and promotion of teachers. Probably the strongest objection expressed by the leadership of the teachers union was the requirement for a systematic and periodic testing program. Such a testing program is essential to evaluating the effectiveness of the educational program.

   The resistance of the teachers union leadership to the plan was reinforced by the new superintendent's overt and covert acceptance of their point of view. It is a fact that a central component of the Academic Achievement Plan was a realistic approach to a system of accountability wherein the performance of teachers, supervisors and administrators could be monitored and evaluated in terms of the academic achievement of their pupils. This approach was seen as threatening to the present situation in which educational personnel obtain and maintain tenure without regard to the quality of their performance.

3. Because of its own internal political and personal conflicts the Board of Education seemed unable to exert any effective authority over school personnel and the superintendent of schools. The goals and objectives of the Academic Achievement Plan were lost within the bickerings which dominated the open and closed meetings of the board. Some individual members of the board at that time seemed more preoccupied with racial and ideological rhetoric than with the primary responsibility of demanding that the quality of education in the Washington public schools be raised.

4. The Washington public school system, not unlike other large city public school systems, seemed dominated by a pervasive pattern of bureaucratic inertia wherein professional employees and administrators, with a few exceptions, were not prone to initiate or accept any changes which would increase the demands upon them. It is clear that this and related forms of bureaucratic sluggishness can only be countered by strong, committed and sustained leadership from the top. This positive form of leadership was not and is not available to the Washington, D.C. public school system.

5. The majority of the parents of the children in the Washington public schools seemed immobilized, apathetic and passive; they made no sustained demands upon the Board of Education, the superintendent of schools and administrators to raise the efficiency of the public schools. They made no sustained effort to improve the quality of education and they did not demand that the academic achievement of their children be raised to a tolerable level. Parents associations and community groups expressed sporadic interest in the fate of the Academic Achievement Plan, but seemed unable to sustain any effective demand for its implementation or the implementation of some alternative plan for improving the efficiency of the public schools.

6. Middle and upper middle class black and white families in Washington, D.C. did not insist upon the development and implementation of any program for raising the quality of education in the Washington, D.C. public schools. These families either had withdrawn their own children from the public schools--sending them to private or parochial schools--or had special attention given to their children in a few public schools. This together with the apathy of the majority of the parents of the children who were left in the public schools resulted in a vacuum of leadership.

The fact that within these past five years the quality of education in the Washington, D.C. public schools has deteriorated and the academic achievement of the children in these schools is still disturbingly below national average must be seen and understood within the peculiar pattern of racial, class, and political dynamics which characterize the Washington, D.C. community. In many ways it is difficult to describe Washington, D.C. as a community. It is a city dominated by the many agencies of the United States government and only recently has it been given some semblance of home rule.

The Board of Education which invited MARC to develop the Academic Achievement Plan was the first local agency which was actually elected by the citizens of the District of Columbia. It was therefore the focus of what little political activity was permitted at that time. It became the center of political debate, class conflict and, unfortunately, the forum for various types of racial demagoguery and a political platform for some individuals. These non-educational posturings were inevitably at the expense of any serious concern for improving the quality of education in the Washington, D.C. public schools.

It also seemed clear that the political officials--the mayor and councilmen--did not want to become entangled and tarnished by involvement in the educational or other issues of the Board of Education. Throughout the controversies surround-

ing the acceptance and abortion of the MARC Academic Achievement Plan, these political officials remained eloquently silent. It is ironic that in the historic mayoralty campaign in 1974 in which two prominent blacks vied for office, the quality of education in the Washington, D.C. public schools received no attention.

Unfortunately, the political and racial posturings and the subordination of educational issues to other concerns persist up to the present. Candidates for election to the Washington school board have run on platforms dealing with political, ideological and racial rather than educational issues. The past and the present superintendents of schools have not sought public approval primarily on the basis of their competence and performance as educational leaders; instead they have appealed to the community for support on the basis of the positions they have taken on racial and civil rights issues.

Discussions concerning whether the past and present superintendents of schools should or should not be retained tend to focus on the color and the racial ideology of these individuals. In the controversy surrounding the past superintendent, the Washington press, radio and television initially developed the theme that the superintendent should be given a chance and be immune from criticism concerning his educational leadership and should not be harassed by "impatient outsiders" because, among other reasons, he was the first black superintendent of the Washington, D.C. public schools.

Among the reasons that MARC decided to withdraw from all further attempts at implementing the Academic Achievement Plan there was the fact that there was no evidence of genuine support from the community or the press for the plan, and there was no insistence that the superintendent and other administrators be evaluated in terms of their contribution to raising the quality of education for the children in the Washington public schools.

In the four years since MARC removed itself from active involvement in trying to implement the Academic Achievement Plan have been significant developments in the governance of public education in Washington, D.C. Anita Allen is no longer president of the board; indeed, a new cast of characters now comprise the school board. This new board, first headed by Marion Barry, did not reappoint Dr. Hugh Scott as superintendent of schools. In his place Dr. Barbara Sizemore of the Chicago public school system was chosen as the first black female superintendent of a major public school system.

Unlike Dr. Scott, Dr. Sizemore spelled out clearly and unequivocally her preoccupation with such racial rhetoric as black consciousness, black identity, black separatism, black culture, black women, and presumably "black education." Her other stated

concerns in the area of public education were community involvement and decentralization. In spite of her positions on these issues, the Board of Education of Washington, D.C. selected Dr. Sizemore as their new superintendent.

Again the present controversy as to whether Dr. Sizemore should or should not be retained as superintendent of schools is not primarily about whether she is or is not competent as an educator. It seems to ignore the fact that the children attending the Washington, D.C. public schools continue to be retarded in the basic academic skills of reading and arithmetic.

Whatever the causes or pattern of causes, the present facts stand as an indictment of the people--black and white--of Washington, D.C. They indicate that the Board of Education, the respective superintendents of schools, the administrators, the teachers and their union, the political officials, the parents and their organizations and the press gave priority to their own interests, their limited visions and permitted the educational rights of the children in Washington, D.C. public schools to be aborted. The inertia of this community made these children expendable. This mocking fact remains:

> The average reading and arithmetic skills of the children in the public schools of Washington, D.C. are shockingly below national averages.
>
> This will remain the tragic fact until such time as the parents and the citizens of Washington, D.C. find and mobilize for themselves the resources to change this fact.
>
> Until this occurs the children in the public schools of Washington, D.C. will be consigned to the human dungheap of functional illiteracy--and its inevitable personal and social consequences.

June 1975

Kenneth B. Clark

THE BEGINNING

In January 1970, the second elected school board of the District of Columbia was sworn into office and promptly selected its officers for the coming year. After considerable political maneuvering, they chose as president Mrs. Anita Allen who had been a member of the Board of Education since 1967.

From the outset Anita Allen was determined to try to make a difference in the lives of the nearly 150,000 students who attended public school in the District. She was troubled primarily by the evidence presented year after year in test scores which showed not only that D.C. students performed considerably below national averages in reading and mathematics, but also and perhaps more frightening, that they fell further and further behind the longer they remained in school. Thus by the end of sixth grade, a majority of the students were two years behind their peers in other school systems across the country. Most teachers, administrators, parents and potential employers acknowledged that students left high school seriously deficient in the basic skills needed for functioning effectively and successfully.

The District of Columbia was faced with many of the same problems as other large urban school systems, particularly those in southern or border states. Prior to the Brown and the Bolling v. Sharp decisions in 1954, the nation's capital had had a strictly segregated educational system and, as in other jurisdictions, a dual school system persisted in one form or another for another decade. Integration was more specifically mandated in 1967 by Judge Skelly Wright's landmark decision, Hobson v. Hansen. The effect of the order was traumatic. The difficulties were compounded when the order was reinforced three years later by another Wright decree requiring equality of expenditures on teachers' salaries among schools in the District.

The sixties saw a shift in the population of the District of Columbia with whites moving out of the city into the suburbs. Even those white families who remained tended to send their children to private schools, as did many middle-class blacks. Thus by 1970 the population of the District was 71 percent black, while the student population was over 90 percent black. Many large urban centers were beset by problems of white flight and decaying inner cities, shrinking tax bases and increasing demands for public services. The District of Columbia was no exception. On the contrary its problems were compounded by political impotence. The city was a creation of the federal

government and all its activities were in the end controlled by a Congress which was only peripherally interested in the views and the welfare of the citizens of the nation's capital. It was not until 1968 that the people of the District were given the right to vote for local officials--the 11 members of the newly constituted Board of Education.

For the next six years these 11 men and women were the only elected representatives in the District. This circumstance led inevitably to the politicizing of the Board of Education. Board meetings became forums for grandstanding and political intrigue, with education frequently the victim. Individuals and community groups used the public meetings to advance their own interests and ideas, many of which were unrelated to educational issues. It also meant that members of the Board of Education were expected to fulfill numerous other functions as representatives of the community in addition to their roles as policy makers for the school system. Finally, an elected Board of Education in an otherwise disenfranchised city tempted individuals whose interests were political rather than educational to run for election.

Anita Allen understood better than most people the circumstances under which policies had to be fashioned and education carried on. This only increased her determination to try to bring quality education to the students of the city. She had been deeply involved in an earlier attempt by the Board of Education to improve public education which had resulted in a lengthy report and numerous recommendations by a team of educators headed by Dr. A. Harry Passow of Columbia University. The acceptance of the report by the Board of Education in September, 1967 was followed by the creation of a study group with Allen as chairman. After a year of study and dozens of meetings, the recommendations of the Passow Report and of the study group were quietly filed away.

When Anita Allen became president of the Board of Education, she decided that whatever was to be done would have to be done expeditiously. She was not interested in another protracted study or in lengthy negotiations. It was this background, experience and frame of mind that led her to contact Dr. Kenneth B. Clark and his organization, the Metropolitan Applied Research Center (MARC). Her request was beguilingly simple: Help us find a way to provide better education for the students in the public schools of the District. It was a cry for help which MARC found difficult to ignore.

MARC describes itself as a research organization which seeks to explore rational strategies for positive social change in American cities. It tries to serve as a catalyst for change and an advocate for the poor and powerless in urban areas. For

a variety of reasons, but mainly because of the interests and concerns of Kenneth Clark and his senior staff, MARC has since its inception devoted a great deal of time and effort to educational issues. One conviction has always dominated MARC's approach to public education: That all children who do not have diagnosed disabilities can learn the basic educational skills needed for survival in the society, if they are effectively taught; and that it is the responsibility of public schools to provide effective education for all students. Since MARC has been advocating this position all along, the challenge of trying to translate his belief into programs for an entire school system was difficult to resist.

There were other reasons why MARC was particularly concerned about the plight of the D.C. schools:

1. The problems of 150,000 students in the District of Columbia schools were critical and begged for immediate attention. "We cannot allow another generation of black youngsters to be sentenced to lives of failure and futility" was the way Kenneth Clark explained his special concern for the pupils of Washington, D.C.

2. Urban school systems were in trouble all over the country. If it were possible to show that education could be improved dramatically in a city with a 95 percent black student population, then perhaps there would be hope for other large urban centers.

3. Whereas problems connected with desegregation and integration were plaguing many school systems--from Atlanta, Georgia to Pontiac, Michigan, this was not an issue in the District. Not only was the student population predominantly black, but so was the Board of Education, the school administration, the teachers and the teachers union. The disruption caused by resistance to court orders requiring busing, which brought learning to a standstill in many schools in the North and South, was not a factor in the schools of Washington. It seemed to MARC, therefore, that an opportunity existed for the improvement of a large school system without having to be concerned about other issues.

4. The D.C. Board of Education appeared to be interested in a system-wide effort and not merely in pilot or demonstration programs. This coincided with MARC's view that the time for such limited efforts had passed.

It is easy in retrospect to acknowledge that the District of Columbia presented as many problems as opportunities and that it was perhaps unrealistic to believe that a black educational system would be more concerned about the needs of black

children than other educational establishments. Nor was it perhaps reasonable to assume that in the end racial considerations would not play a role in what happened or did not happen in the schools.

Even now, however, MARC believes that the D.C. schools were worth trying to change not only because the need was so great and so immediate, but also because the lessons learned in Washington might be of benefit to others who think that public schools can and must be held accountable for teaching children the skills they need.

It is the purpose of this report to describe the process of trying to bring about change in one of the most basic and important institutions of society and to try to draw conclusions that may be useful to others.

DEVELOPING THE PLAN

The initial contact between the school system of the District of Columbia and MARC was made by Anita Allen, president of the Board of Education. Over a period of six weeks from January to March 1970 members of the MARC staff met with Anita Allen, members of a Board of Education subcommittee and eventually with the board as a whole. At first it was suggested that Kenneth Clark serve as chairman of an advisory committee on the overall problems of the D.C. schools, but eventually a different approach was adopted: MARC was to prepare an outline of a program for action, to be submitted to the Board of Education by June 30.

Although a meeting between Clark and the Board of Education on April 1 resulted in an agreement that MARC should go ahead with the development of an academic achievement plan, there was considerable variation in the attitudes of individual board members towards this project. The differences reflected intra-board rivalries and bitterness as much as any real objections to the project. Opposition centered around the issue of whether or not it was prudent to prepare a comprehensive program for the D.C. schools at a time when the board was in the process of searching for a new superintendent. Those who thought that major changes should await his arrival argued that the new man should be given the opportunity to draw up his own design rather than have a plan imposed on him. Those who held the contrary view believed that:

1. The Board of Education as the policy-making body was clearly within its prerogative in trying to develop a program for the improvement of the academic achievement of the students.

2. The existence of a comprehensive plan would enable the board to select a new superintendent who would support and implement it.

3. Attempts to improve the D.C. school system should not be postponed any longer than absolutely necessary.

In spite of this divergence of views, it would be true to say that there was no serious opposition to the project as proposed and that, on the contrary, many members of the Board of Education were quite enthusiastic about it.

When MARC committed itself to developing an academic achievement plan for the District of Columbia in a period of less than three months, it did so fully aware that time limitations would determine the shape and content of the product. This reflected the conviction that what was required was not lengthy research into theories of child behavior, extensive experimentation with new models, a reanalysis of data collected for the Coleman Report or even an in-depth review of the personnel policies of the school system. As indicated earlier, MARC senior staff was and is convinced that there is no secret about the learning process and that children will learn, if they are taught effectively. It was also clear from the beginning that what the children of the District needed most desperately was a mastery of the basic skills--reading, mathematics, and written and oral communication. Since these subjects are emphasized at the elementary and junior high school levels, MARC, with the agreement of the Board of Education, decided to focus its attention on grades one through nine.

The task of putting together a program thus became manageable, although it still required an immense amount of work compressed into a very short span of time. The design was developed by a task force of individuals pulled together from all sections of MARC, including the staff of the Washington office. Under the direction and supervision of Kenneth Clark and Dr. Eleanor Farrar who was director of MARC's Washington office, the members of the group set out to gather material on curriculum, teacher training, differentiated staffing, and administrative and teacher accountability. They reviewed successful programs in various parts of the country, concentrating on those which emphasized the acquisition of basic skills by students in large city schools. The Washington group, meanwhile, collected materials--published and unpublished--about the District public schools and conducted interviews with administrators, supervisors, principals, teachers and individuals active in education. Visits to classrooms and schools also yielded useful information.

In addition to these activities, a number of seminars were held in New York with educators from Washington and other cities. These meetings gave the MARC task force an opportunity to gain additional insights and perspectives and to evaluate their own assumptions. Members of the task force also were in frequent touch with the liaison committee of the Board of Education, and members of the board were kept informed of the progress being made.

The proposal was not only developed in a very short period of time, but also at nominal cost. It had been decided at the outset that no public funds would be used for the project, but that MARC would raise the necessary amount. A total of $32,500 was contributed, partly by foundations and universities and partly by groups and individuals in the Washington area. The latter contributions were particularly welcome since they indicated local interest and support. Others who supported MARC's efforts at this early stage included the local news media which generally expressed the view that the schools were in such abysmal shape that any plan which might help to bring about change in this situation would be useful. They also tend to approve of the selection of Kenneth Clark for this project because of his years of effort to raise the quality of education for minority children. A number of local civic associations and the influential D.C. Citizens for Better Public Education also endorsed the effort.

Opposition to the project at this point was negligible, coming primarily from one member of the Board of Education. His attitudes and actions were influenced mainly by his search for a personal constituency and he automatically opposed anything the president and the majority of the board supported.

The other important, though at this stage less vociferous critic, was the president of the Washington Teachers Union. His objections were based on two considerations: 1) that no new plan would be more effective than programs already "formulated by those who have been closest to the situation, namely, the teachers"; 2) that in the final analysis no plan would "liberate the school system from the bonds which shackle it, namely, the Congress of the United States."

The League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia was the only other organized group that spoke out against the project at this stage. It expressed the view that the development of a plan for improving the public education of the District should await the arrival of the new superintendent, since "any responsible person is much more enthusiastically committed to a plan if he is directly involved in its development."

Three months after MARC accepted the task, the third and final draft of the Academic Achievement Project (AAP) was ready. It was discussed first with the liaison committee of the Board of Education and two days later on July 9, 1970, copies of the plan were distributed to all members of the board. On the afternoon of July 13, the Board of Education met in executive session with Kenneth Clark, Eleanor Farrar and other members of the MARC staff. The session lasted about three hours and was extraordinary for its interpersonal congeniality. It was an open and frank discussion about the proposal and its implications. Board members asked many probing and stimulating questions. The one opposing member seemed particularly concerned about the plan's emphasis on standard English, arguing that to reject a child's speech pattern was equivalent to rejecting the child. For the moment, however, Clark appeared to allay most of the apprehensions expressed by various board members.

The executive session was followed by a public meeting at which Clark made an official presentation to the Board of Education and to the audience which included newspaper and TV reporters, school administrators and representatives of various community groups. It was a comparatively small audience, due at least in part to the fact that the time and place of the meeting had not been announced until the last moment and that it was summertime. Clark once again answered the questions of board members, some of whom now sounded much more critical than they had earlier. A motion was made to accept the AAP as board policy. A substitute motion to "receive" the report but to postpone action until public hearings and meetings of teachers and administrators had been held, was defeated by a vote of 7 to 4. The original motion to adopt the plan was then passed with one member voting in opposition and one abstention.

The final vote of 9 to 1 was the nearest expression of board unanimity in many months, a fact which was not lost on the media or on school personnel. At the time, it seemed like a good omen. In retrospect, one can see that the earlier 7 to 4 vote was a more accurate reflection of board sentiment and that unanimity masked, but did not dissipate, serious disagreements among board members.

The action of the board was supported by many different groups and individuals--ranging from civic associations and university presidents to newspaper columnists and radio and TV stations. Most importantly it was endorsed enthusiastically by the acting superintendent who in a statement to a congressional subcommittee had this to say about the plan:

> We are committed to demonstrating to this community that we are going to raise the academic achievement of our students.... There are going to be no more excuses, no more saying that the home has failed, that there are bad socioeconomic conditions. We are going to do what the school system is supposed to do, which is to teach these children how to read despite the handicaps.

Opposition to the AAP surfaced almost at once and focused in the early days not so much on the details of the plan itself as on the way in which it had been adopted. It was the view of many--including the four Board of Education members who had voted to postpone action--that time should have been allowed for public hearings, for consultations with school personnel and particularly also for talks with the teachers union. Once again it was suggested that it would have been better if the board had waited to adopt the plan until after it had selected a new superintendent.

THE AAP--A BRIEF ANALYSIS

A Possible Reality: A Design for the Attainment of High Academic Achievement for the Students of the Public Elementary and Junior High Schools of Washington, D.C. (AAP)--the plan which aroused such strong feelings and eventually so much controversy--is neither very radical nor particularly daring. It is easy to read and easy to understand.

The AAP is not a research study nor a blueprint but a "comprehensive design for a plan involving interrelated components" to be developed and implemented by the Board of Education and its staff. It provides clear goals and objectives for the school system (grades one to nine) and outlines programs and changes which must be instituted if the goals are to be reached. The basic assumptions underlying the design are as follows:

1. All children, with the exception of those few who have been professionally diagnosed as in need of specialized services, will learn if they are effectively taught.

2. The average level of performance of public school students can and should be raised to grade level or above.

3. The most important skills schools can teach are reading, mathematics, and written and oral communication. These skills are essential for academic success and necessary for full participation in modern society.

4. High teacher expectation is an essential ingredient in the learning process.

5. Heterogeneous grouping reflects the realities of our society more accurately than homogeneous grouping and is an important learning experience in itself.

6. Schools must accept responsibility for teaching basic skills to all children regardless of family or socioeconomic background.

7. The single most important factor in an attempt to reverse academic retardation is the quality of leadership provided by the Board of Education and the administration. Leadership must be firm and clear because no progress at the classroom level can be expected unless teachers, principals, students and parents know at every stage what is expected of them.

The design for academic achievement did not prescribe in detail how and when each phase of the plan was to be implemented nor who should be responsible for what. It was thought by MARC that this should be left to the Board of Education and the administration. However the document, discussed some of the prerequisites needed for successful implementation. Specific recommendations included the following:

1. Proclamation of a reading mobilization year for the entire school system. This is at the heart of the design and attests to the commitment of the school system to the objectives of the AAP. It is the total commitment to one major objective for all students which distinguishes the AAP from most other so-called innovative programs.

2. Creation of reading and mathematics mobilization teams in every school to support and assist teachers, help plan and implement the specifics of the reading and mathematics programs, evaluate curriculum effectiveness and serve as a constant reminder of the school system's commitment to improving the basic academic skills of students.

3. Establishment of minimum floors in reading and mathematics for every grade level. The assumption that all children can be taught to master the necessary basic skills requires that minimum floors of achievement in content learning and skill acquisition be set and adhered to by all school personnel.

4. Organization of heterogeneous classrooms on a system-wide basis. This recommendation was based on the belief that homogeneous grouping is educationally and psychologically harmful to children in the advanced as well as in the lower-level classes and that it reinforces low teacher expectation.

5. Establishment of an evaluation and testing program for the purpose of judging the progress made by students against national standards.

6. Development of supports for teachers in the form of tutors (adult and student), teacher aides, mobilization teams and staff development programs.

7. Development of a system of differentiated staffing as another means of upgrading the teaching profession.

8. Involvement of parents in the educational process by keeping them informed about plans and programs, teacher expectations and the progress of their children, and by using parents as tutors and aides.

9. Elimination of impediments to learning, such as visual and hearing problems or lack of food and clothing, and the motivation of students through concrete evidence of academic success and constructive forms of competition.

These in essence were the content and the recommendations of the design which the staff of the D.C. school system was instructed to begin implementing in time for the opening of the new school year in September 1970.

TWO MONTHS TO GET READY

It was probably unrealistic to have expected the District of Columbia school system, even under the best of circumstances, to prepare plans for the implementation of the AAP in a period of less than two months. But the determination and enthusiasm of those who saw this project as a means of helping children learn the basic skills they so desperately needed carried the day, and all suggestions for delay were turned down. Particularly Anita Allen, but also the acting superintendent and some, though by no means all, members of his staff were convinced that the time had come to move ahead in spite of obstacles.

Although the report stated that all parts of the design were interrelated and that the success of the plan depended on the implementation of each component, it was clear that not all provisions could be made operational by September or perhaps even within the first year. But it was hoped that plans could be developed which would establish priorities and a timetable for action.

MARC had left the development of plans and priorities to the Board of Eduation and the school administration in the belief that the blueprint for action had to come from those who would be responsible for putting the design into effect. The assumption of the MARC staff was that adjustments would be made which would tailor the design to the organization and the specific needs of the District public schools. The objective of improving the academic performance of students through concentration on the basic skills was fixed by the AAP; translating the program into action was the responsibility of the Board of Education and its personnel.

Planning for implementation was thus left to the acting superintendent who was totally committed to the AAP. He used the decision of the board as a mandate to move ahead, diverting funds, mobilizing resources and reassigning personnel, all in the interest of making things happen in time for the opening of the new school term. The acting superintendent began by naming an AAP implementation committee, consisting of two senior school administrators and a professor of education from Howard University. The committee was responsible to the superintendent and had a good deal of authority over other administrative units.

The next few weeks saw an avalanche of activity at all levels. Twelve subcommittees were created to deal with the major recommendations included in the AAP. These committees were composed of teachers, principals and administrators, augmented when necessary by private citizens or representatives of city agencies, colleges and universities. The committees began their work immediately, and many of them had preliminary reports ready by the beginning of August. Thus, for example, precise instructions were sent to all principals regarding heterogeneous grouping; although the original random number system for assigning students to classrooms was abandoned because it was too complicated and confusing, the vast majority of principals adhered to the policy of heterogeneous grouping itself. In fact, it is one of the aspects of the AAP which appears to have survived over the years.

Three other components of the design received immediate and careful attention: the creation of reading and mathematics mobilization (mobe) teams, the establishment of minimum floors in reading and mathematics for each grade level, and the creation of a testing program. The reports of the reading and math mobe team committees showed that they had a very clear conception of what the AAP was all about and of what would be required to put it into effect. The reports detailed how much and what type of personnel would be needed, what the program would cost, what outside resources should be enlisted, what

time frame would be realistic and how the whole project could and should be monitored. Mobe teams were expected to work in every school and with every teacher. The reports were not only precise, but reflected genuine enthusiasm and commitment to the implementation of all aspects of the design.

Plans for implementing the testing component of the AAP were also completed during the summer months. In fact, this was the only part of the design which was specifically funded by the Board of Education which voted to redirect $700,000 for the administration of three tests during the school year. The tests were to be given to all students, grades one through nine.

For a variety of reasons, which will be discussed later, the testing program became a source of bitter conflict between the different factions in the educational community. At the time, however, the rapidity with which the board acted served as one more indication that it was serious about the AAP.

Other subcommittees which met during the summer to plan how to carry out specific aspects of the design included the committee on noneducational impediments which brought together representatives from 15 community and District government agencies, and the committee on tutorial needs and programs which presented a detailed action plan for the recruitment, training, deployment, supervision and evaluation of tutors. Meetings were also held between school personnel and representatives of local universities and with parents and representatives of community groups.

The individuals who were involved in devising plans for putting the AAP into effect during this hectic two-month period shared a common purpose and common convictions. For instance, they assumed that the Board of Education and administrators were actively committed to the design. They assumed that the design itself was a serious attempt to improve public school education in the District and not just another experiment. They supported the objectives of the AAP even as they disagreed about details, emphasis or priorities. Some of the committees perceived this planning stage as an opportunity to reorganize and strengthen individual departments and functions and consequently submitted not only recommendations for action, but requests for funds to carry out the AAP mandate. The fact that the issue of costs was never seriously addressed by the board (except in the case of the testing program) was a mistake which had important consequences at a later time.

While the subcommittees were trying to work out the specifics, the three person implementation team, the acting superintendent and his top staff supervised and monitored the overall

progress and tried to reassure principals, teachers and parents. Decisions were made on staff development and teacher orientation programs and on whether or not school opening should be delayed in order to give staff more time to get organized.

Time was an important factor in all that happened or did not happen during these hectic weeks. It was a serious handicap, for example, that not enough copies of the design were available to give one to every principal and teacher in the school system as soon as the project was adopted. Copies should also have been distributed to all public libraries so that members of the community could have read the report and found out what it was all about. Instead, most of the school staff as well as parents and students got their information from news reports.

The first official notification of the adoption of the design by the Board of Education was transmitted to teachers three weeks after the board vote. At that time, a five-page summary of the AAP and a request for suggestions and comments on how to implement it most effectively were sent to all school personnel. It was not until the end of August, however, that most principals received copies of the report, and teachers had to wait until they went back to school before they could familiarize themselves with the program.

Similarly, because of a shortage of time and because it was summer and many people were on vacation, no general meetings for teachers and other school officials could be held to acquaint them with the design and provide them with an opportunity to ask questions and to voice their concerns. As a result of this lack of hard information, misconceptions and misinformation about the plan began to circulate. Those who were opposed to the AAP could misrepresent its objectives and recommendations without fear of contradiction. The teachers union in particular took advantage of the teachers' and community's lack of information to propagandize against the design. At the time, however, so many positive things appeared to be happening and so many other important issues had to be resolved that no one paid sufficient attention to the fact that so few individuals had actually read the document.

On September 10, the schools opened on schedule. A great deal of planning and preparation had been completed by that time: Heterogeneous grouping prevailed in most classrooms; reading and math mobe teams were well on the way to being functional; personnel had been reassigned to support reading and mathematics efforts; minimum floors in reading and mathematics were ready to be sent out; a testing schedule had been drawn up, and all subcommittees were working on final reports.

In addition, some orientation meetings had been held in early September, and local radio and television stations had broadcast information about the AAP. Most importantly, there was evidence everywhere of the commitment and determination of the school system to begin putting the AAP into practice on the first day of the new term.

A memorandum circulated by the implementation team to all school personnel testified to the existence of a clear understanding of the basic educational principles of the AAP. The memorandum included a listing of these principles:

1. Our children are educable.

2. The primary responsibility of the school is the intellectual development of the pupil.

3. Effective teaching results in viable learning.

4. The quality of a teacher's expectations, incentives, acceptance, compassion, and instruction largely determines the quantity and quality of a pupil's educational development.

5. The urban school can be an oasis of acceptance, a haven sheltering and cushioning the child from the cruel realities of his home and community.

6. Functional literacy (in the foreseeable future in the U.S.A.) will continue to be the essential intellectual skill basic to academic achievement and later economic well-being.

7. Reading (and mathematics) skill is learned behavior, and it can be attained through planned, systematic, purposeful instruction.

8. Direct involvement of parents in the activities of the schools attended by their children reinforces the school's educational program.

It is certain that no one was completely satisfied with what had been accomplished during the summer and that major issues remained to be resolved. Mistakes had been made at all levels and tensions often ran high. Personalities got in the way of change and effective organization, and petty squabbles were allowed to escalate. But there were also excitement and concern and dedication and optimism stemming from the hope that at last something good was going to happen to public education in the District of Columbia.

THE SEARCH FOR A SUPERINTENDENT

During the summer of 1970 the question of who would be appointed the next superintendent of the District of Columbia schools was still unresolved. The process of selection had begun some time prior to the submission of the Academic Achievement Project to the Board of Education but interviews of prospective candidates did not start until the end of July--more than two weeks after the adoption of the design. The top six candidates for the position were provided with copies of the AAP before their final interviews with the whole Board of Education. During these interviews, each candidate's approach to the plan and its implementation was probed at length. In fact, board members who supported the AAP most enthusiastically were strongly influenced in their reaction to a candidate by what they perceived to be his commitment to the AAP.

Those member, on the other hand, who were more critical of the AAP and who would have preferred postponing implementation were conscious of the fact that it would be difficult if not impossible to get board approval of a candidate who did not support the design. This meant that it was to the advantage of a candidate to appear enthusiastic about the AAP.

Eventually the choice was narrowed down to two candidates. Although there were a number of reasons why board members might have preferred one over the other, it is highly probable that the decisive factor in the final selection was the candidate's attitude towards the AAP. Both finalists said they supported the design and its implementation, but their approach to it was different. The man who in the end was not offered the position raised serious and searching questions about the plan and about the school system as a whole. He supported the design's philosophy, but on the basis of his experience with a similar program in his own community, he foresaw many problems. He wanted to find out whether the board, the teachers union and other power centers in the District were prepared to face the problems connected with the new plan realistically. This hesitancy on the part of the candidate was held against him by some members of the board who were in favor of the AAP.

The other candidate, Dr. Hugh Scott, who was eventually chosen for the job, appeared to have fewer anxieties or questions about the design. He was able to convince the Board of Education--and particularly some of the members of the majority who were most interested in the AAP--that he agreed with its basic concept that all children can learn and also that he considered black children normal, even though they were perhaps

disadvantaged because of their background and environment. He stated that Kenneth Clark was one of his educational heroes and indicated that he had experience in the administration of a program not unlike the AAP. Although he expected that many details of implementation would have to be worked out later, he accepted work done during the summer as the starting point for his administration of the plan. Scott raised no serious questions about any aspect of the AAP and appeared totally confident that it could all be accomplished. He did insist, however, that the school system needed to be reorganized and decentralized.

The final vote on Hugh Scott's appointment was unanimous, although the president of the board abstained. In the executive session before the official meeting, two other board members expressed some doubts about Scott's qualifications, but the other eight members, including those usually in the minority, carried the day.

The importance to the school system and to the AAP of the selection of Scott as superintendent cannot be overstated. Not only the appointment itself but the circumstances which led to it are of considerable importance to an understanding of what happened to the project during the next three years. The facts were as follows:

1. The Board of Education was basically split into two factions--the majority which supported Anita Allen, consisting of a total of either six or seven members, and the minority which opposed her. (This division was reflected in the voting pattern at board meetings at least 60 percent of the time.)

2. In spite of the nearly unanimous vote on the adoption of the AAP, the board minority, as mentioned earlier, was not enthusiastic about putting it into effect immediately.

3. The AAP appeared to have such solid support within the board and in the community that the minority members of the board believed that no one could be chosen superintendent who did not seem to be strongly committed to the design.

4. Hugh Scott, the individual the minority supported for the position of superintendent, may or may not have been in favor of the AAP. However, he wanted the job badly enough (he said he could "taste" it) to be willing to let himself be coached by one or more members of the minority faction on what stance to take to convince the majority that he did indeed support the AAP.

5. Some of the members of the majority were swayed too easily by Scott's facile rhetoric supporting the AAP, while others did not feel strongly enough about either candidate to challenge the growing support for Scott among the board as a whole.

6. For a number of reasons connected with her previous involvement in the selection of a superintendent (who turned out to have been an unfortunate choice) Anita Allen took a less active part in the selection process than she usually took in important decisions. It was not until the very end that she became directly involved and indicated her preference for the other candidate. By then it was too late to line up her supporters, particularly since her man was a rather reluctant candidate and would have had to be persuaded to accept the position. This was seen as a handicap by those members who were impatient to get started on the AAP.

It was under these circumstances that the board decided to ask Hugh Scott to become superintendent. It should be mentioned here that MARC and Kenneth Clark were not involved in the selection, except at the last moment when they made a rather feeble attempt to convince some members of the board that the runner-up would make a better superintendent than Scott. This particular maneuver was not only futile, but it backfired later. It antagonized members of the Board of Education and made a permanent enemy of Scott and some of his supporters. To the end, Scott never forgave Clark and MARC for favoring his rival.

We do not believe that this attitude basically altered the fate of the AAP, but it complicated and to some extent poisoned relationships between many individuals. It also made it possible and fashionable to equate support for the design with opposition to the superintendent and thus made people--particularly employees of the school system--much more cautious in their support of the program.

This is all much clearer in retrospect, particularly because the "coaching" incident did not become public knowledge until a year later. At the time it appeared that a unified Board of Education had adopted an imaginative program to improve the academic achievement of public school students and had selected a new superintendent who was enthusiastic about it and committed to its implementation.

Even before he officially assumed his position, however, Hugh Scott became embroiled in a major controversy between the Board of Education and its staff on the one side and the Washington Teachers Union on the other.

THE WASHINGTON TEACHERS UNION

As has been mentioned earlier, the Washington Teachers Union was opposed to the Academic Achievement Project from the beginning. The union's objections fell into three broad categories: philosophical disagreements based on the belief that the society needed to be transformed before educational changes could be expected to have an impact; objections to the way in which the design was adopted and particularly the lack of union involvement in the process; and specific disagreements with the focus and direction of the AAP.

In a press release dated July 20, the union condemned the Board of Education for having adopted the AAP a week earlier and stated that "the Board has committed a criminal act in promising the public that it has now found the magic formula to cure the ills which plague this school system.... The Union will not be a party to such a hoax, nor will it permit the students to suffer under such a hoax."

The union also criticized what it called "the practical aspects" of the plan. It objected to the reliance on standardized tests, which the union considered inadequate to evaluate the performance of black, urban students; to the competitive ingredients of the design; to the evaluation of teachers on the basis of student achievement; and to the fact that the AAP was initiated when the bulk of the school personnel was on vacation. The union also stated that it considered the design to be financially unrealistic.

What the union leadership found most objectionable, however, was the fact that it had not been involved in the creation of the AAP, its adoption by the Board of Education nor in the development of the plans for putting it into effect. The union president insisted that he had never been consulted by nor had met with any member of the MARC staff, although he acknowledged having held a 45-minute long conversation with a MARC representative. It might be noted that during this conversation the president had told the MARC representative that for strategic reasons the union would have to oppose any plan that it did not help to develop, no matter how desirable it might be.

Even if it is acknowledged that the union had not been involved in designing the AAP and had not been consulted by the Board of Education prior to its adoption, the union had in fact been offered an opportunity to participate in the development of plans for implementing it.

Two days after the press release was issued, and less than ten days after the design had been adopted by the Board of Education, Kenneth Clark, Eleanor Farrar and other members of the MARC staff met for more than two hours with the executive committee of the Washington Teachers Union. The purpose of the meeting was to hold a frank and open discussion which it was thought would convince the union that the AAP was not a hoax and not an attempt to blame teachers for the failures of the school system. MARC hoped that the union would view the AAP as a serious effort to raise student achievement by providing the supports and assistance needed for improving the performance of the total school system.

Members of the executive committee of the teachers union were assured that the design was by no means cast in concrete and that suggestions on how it could be improved were more than welcome. It was also pointed out by MARC staff that the implementation process had barely begun and that the teachers union could play an important role in that process.

When it became evident that most of the individuals sitting around the table were unwilling to put aside their grievances against the Board of Education, their opposition to school administrators and their suspicion of a plan they had not formulated themselves, Kenneth Clark tried to persuade them with one other argument. He appealed to them as black educators responsible for the future of black youngsters who deserved a better chance than they had had up to now. "We have an opportunity," he said, "to turn this school system around and to make it a symbol of excellence. If we join together," he told the union leadership, "it can be done."

For a few moments, it seemed as though the majority of the executive committee would respond to this appeal. But almost at once, narrower concerns gained the upper hand, and issues of teacher status and union prerogatives took precedence over student's learning to read. In a letter following the meeting William Simons, the president of the teachers union, told Clark that his presentation helped to enlighten the members and that "all is not lost" as far as union support for the AAP was concerned. However, he said that the following conditions would have to be agreed to by MARC:

1. MARC will not participate in any further deliberation with the board until the legal aspects of the board action have been resolved.

2. MARC will engage in full discussion with the union as to the merits and implementation of the proposal.

3. The design for implementation will be developed jointly with the union.

MARC felt unable to accept these conditions because of its responsibility to the Board of Education and its desire to involve as many groups and individuals (including non-union teachers) as possible in discussions about the AAP. As far as the third condition was concerned, MARC pointed out that plans for implementation would have to be developed by the union in conjunction with the Board of Education and its professional staff. In short, MARC refused to let itself be either co-opted or used by the union in its power struggle with the Board of Education.

This response by MARC was unacceptable to the union which thereupon embarked on a program of active opposition and obstruction. The union instructed its members not to cooperate in any way with the implementation of the so-called Clark Plan. It said that its teachers would not administer the standarized tests or, alternatively, would give students the answers to the test questions in advance, thus destroying their validity. If all else failed, the union said, it would call a strike because its contract had been violated by the Board of Education.

There is evidence to show that the union's position was based primarily on two factors: 1) personal pique at not being consulted prior to submission of the AAP to the board, and 2) the fear that teachers would not measure up if they were held accountable for the educational achievement of their students. The improvement in the academic achievement of the students was far from uppermost in the minds of the union leaders. "What is good for children," the president said, "is not going to be purchased at the price of dignity for adults."

The relationship between the union, MARC and the Board of Education was complicated by one other circumstance, namely, the fact that only about 53 percent of all teachers in the District of Columbia belonged to the Washington Teachers Union. This made the union leadership more orthodox and more anxious to pose as the protector of teachers' interests than might have been the case if it had had a broader base of support. It also meant that the union was particularly anxious to capitalize on issues such as the AAP which might appeal to a larger group of teachers. Many teachers inside and outside the union were suspicious of the design and resentful of the fact that they would have to face new problems and pressures on the job.

The other consequence of low union membership was a tendency on the part of outsiders, including MARC and the community and perhaps even the Board of Education to take the union less seriously as the representative of teacher attitudes and opinions.

Whether or not it might have been possible to defuse union opposition by a more sympathetic approach and more extensive consultations between MARC and the leadership is not

at all clear. At the time of the AAP the union was heavily influenced by a point of view, which objected to "Clark's whole premise...that low-income blacks can master the tools of a racist society that have been used to exclude them." It is thus likely that no amount of rational argument based on the belief that reading and other basic skills are essential tools for dealing with any problem in a society, regardless of one's ideology, would have persuaded the union to change its stance. It might, nonetheless, have been useful if MARC had tried to convince the community that it was willing to take the union's objections into account. Alternatively, MARC might have been able to expose the basis of union opposition for what it was.

As it turned out, the Washington Teachers Union spearheaded the drive against the AAP. A week before the opening of school, for example, the union held a three-day leadership workshop at which representative of each school were briefed on the executive committee's position. Two resolutions were adopted at that meeting:

1. That teachers in the District of Columbia agree not to cooperate at this time in any way with this "nebulously arranged document."

2. That teachers explain to students, parents and other community people "the hoax that is being perpetrated on us."

The union threatened that teachers would practice "civil disobedience" unless the implementation of the AAP was postponed. Their first act of disobedience would be to refuse to administer the standardized tests scheduled to begin on September 21, one week after school opened. This threat led to a series of meetings between the union, the acting superintendent, the newly appointed superintendent, the Board of Education and some outside negotiators. It was a bruising confrontation. Teachers defied the board by refusing to administer scheduled tests. This action led to a threat by the board to withdraw recognition from the union as the official bargaining agent for the teachers.

After lengthy negotiations, an agreement was reached between the two sides. Teachers would participate in the completion of the first series of tests, but no use would be made of the tests prior to October 31, 1970, except for planning purposes. A joint union-board committee would be created to make final recommendations to the superintendent on the interpretation of the test results, their use and the possible modifications of the test program. Under no circumstances would test results be used to evaluate teachers. The union would select the teachers for membership on all city-wide committees dealing with issues subject to the collective bargaining agreement.

(The union insisted that the AAP fell under that provision.) A joint union-board committee would be created immediately to negotiate and resolve all areas of concern related to curriculum, programs and the role of the staff. Finally, the union pledged its cooperation in the effort to achieve "the goals of academic excellence in the AAP."

The agreement brought to an end the immediate threat of teacher "civil disobedience," and standardized tests were administered to all students by classroom teachers.

This controversy at the opening of the school year had far-reaching effects on the implementation of the AAP. It also placed the new superintendent in a difficult position at the very beginning of his term of office. Scott became involved in the negotiations with the union and considered himself caught between a Board of Education infuriated by the union's defiance of its authority, on the one hand, and an intransigent union leadership which argued that its contractual rights had been violated, on the other. Apparently, Scott would have been willing to negotiate a settlement at the cost of making concessions to the union on the AAP, but the school board and many other individuals in the community were opposed to such a move. The union, at this point, was anything but popular and for a time was subject to extensive criticism by the media and by community organizations which regarded its tactics as obstructionist, and its leaders as individuals who were more concerned with their own prestige than with the education of students.

The new superintendent was annoyed to find himself in the middle of a serious dispute, and in a manner which was to become familiar as time went on he blamed the AAP, Kenneth Clark and the Board of Education for his discomfiture. He also felt at a disadvantage because he was new to the District and unfamiliar with the politics of the school system.

The settlement led to a slowdown in the implementation process, because already established committees had to mark time while union representatives were appointed and brought up to date. Almost every aspect of the design suddenly became subject to redefinition and renegotiation. It should also be noted that the agreement specifically did not commit the union to support of the AAP but only to "achieving the goals of academic excellence."

The union neither then nor later made any pretense of its opposition to the design. It passed resolutions and circulated petitions showing the determination of teachers to continue to boycott the AAP. Within months the union leadership congratulated itself and its members for their "determination and

unity" which it claimed turned the tide and led to the departure from the Washington scene of Clark and of what the union described as the "now defunct Clark Plan."

This claim was probably only a slight exaggeration. Undoubtedly union opposition to the AAP in general and to standardized tests in particular caused massive confusion at the beginning of the school term. It also tended, then and later, to divert attention from the overall objectives of the design and meant that the time and effort of school personnel were focused on the problems of testing and on other issues raised by the union, rather than on the creation of mobilization teams or the establishment of tutorial programs.

Union opposition continued to dominate discussion, poisoned the atmosphere and polarized school personnel and, to a certain degree, the board and the community. It also put the supporters of the plan on the defensive, a posture from which they never quite recovered. Finally, the attitude of the union served as an ever available excuse for inaction by all those who did not want to see the AAP succeed, from the superintendent down to the most junior classroom teacher.

THE FIRST YEAR

Hugh Scott officially became superintendent of the District of Columbia school system on October 1, 1970. By that time the immediate conflict with the union had been resolved and the testing program had been nearly completed. A decision had been made earlier by the acting superintendent that the development of effective reading and mathematics mobilization teams in all elementary schools should be given the highest priority, and he had used his authority to assign reading specialists, supervisors, language art specialists and librarians to individual schools with specific responsibilities for participation in mobe teams. Most elementary schools had mobe teams in operation by the time Scott became superintendent, and their functions and responsibilities had been outlined in a series of circulars distributed to all schools. Other aspects of the AAP were being addressed by the various subcommittees which were rushing to complete their assignments, in spite of the fact that some were facing delays due to the requirement of union participation on each committee.

Despite the many difficulties caused by lack of time, by uncertainty about the new superintendent's views and approach, and by the confusion created by the teachers union, the momentum which was built up during the summer to put the AAP into effect was still in evidence when Scott assumed his new post.

Scott Takes Over

It became apparent almost at once that the new superintendent wanted to put his own stamp on the District of Columbia school system as rapidly as possible. Although he pursued this objective in a number of ways, he placed particular emphasis on his relations with the community devoting a great deal of time to speaking engagements, meetings with civic groups and conferences. He also worked on plans for the decentralization of the school administration and although they were not put into effect during his three-year tenure as superintendent, they were an important aspect of Scott's approach to education in the District.

Most importantly, however, Scott moved to absorb the AAP into the overall educational system, of which, as he liked to remind people, he was the superintendent. When asked about the Clark Plan, he responded that it was more accurate to call it the Scott Plan. But while reiterating his support of the goals of the AAP, he also mentioned frequently that he might want to make "major modifications." He never specified what modifications he had in mind or what aspects of the plan he thought needed to be altered. There is no evidence that he had strong views about the design itself, but only that he wanted to find ways of making it his own rather than acknowledging someone else's authorship.

This desire to put his personal stamp on the plan led the superintendent to make some administrative changes in the structure that had been created to put the AAP into operation. He replaced the three-member implementation team, which had worked comparatively effectively during the summer months, with a more "representative" 38-member advisory council. This group was to "assist the superintendent in making decisions with regard to the relative educational merits and operational feasibility of proposals made by the various task forces and subcommittees created to accomplish the goals set forth in the design for academic achievement." He also created three other committees to "move forward with the implementation of the design," a monitoring committee, a follow-through committee, and an assessment committee. Shortly thereafter he established the position of executive coordinator for the AAP--someone who was to take responsibility for "seeing that things get done on the school level." During the next two years the superintendent shifted this responsibility from one individual to another and from one division to another until it became almost impossible to know who was in charge of the AAP at any given moment.

Also in the interest of turning the AAP into the Scott Plan, the superintendent issued instructions that all reports, position papers and other materials regarding the design should

be submitted to the advisory council for review. The superintendent assured the Board of Education that he expected all subcommittee reports to reach his desk by November 13 and that he would act on them without delay.

Many of the reports submitted to the superintendent were excellent and dealt in detail with problems inherent in putting the AAP into operation and with the changes required to overcome these problems. The reports also included action plans, recommendations for acquiring additional resources and supports and their costs, and frequently a request for guidance on specific issues. With one exception, these report were neither acted upon nor circulated to the schools; nor were they discussed with the Board of Education during this early period.

It must be assumed that the superintendent preferred not to take action on these plans until he had had an opportunity to mold them to fit his own views, but since he chose to devote his time to other matters, particularly contacts with the community, the reports tended to stay on his desk week after week. This laxity in Scott's approach to the administration of the AAP--more than any other single issue--led the Board of Education to make ever increasing demands on him. Thus, for example, in a letter dated December 16, the president of the board complained that members had received no copies of any of the reports approved by the superintendent. On December 23, Scott transmitted reports of three subcommittees with the comment that "abstracts...are being prepared for use in the field to implement the AAP."

What hurt the relationship between the Board of Education (or at least its majority) and the superintendent was not only, or even primarily, his lack of responsiveness to the board's inquiries about the AAP. The major friction was caused by his apparent inability or unwillingness to take hold of the AAP implementation process and move it along. He frequently mentioned that he had "reservations" about the design and he often said that he thought it "naive," but he did not present--either then or later--specific recommendations for changes in the plan or requests to delay action until certain other steps had been taken. The board, the school system and the community were left in the dark about his plans. He failed to take action on his own initiative or even develop plans which would have indicated that he understood the objectives of the design, the specific problems it raised, and the changes required to make it work. It was said, at the time, that Scott had probably never even read the proposal or understood that it was a program of interdependent and closely connected components.

The Normal Child

Scott's approach to the design was piecemeal and the actions he took were usually in response to board initiatives. Intimately related to his seeming lack of interest in the AAP was Scott's habit of making confusing statements about certain aspects of the design in speeches, press interviews or in other public announcements.

For example, one of the most important concepts in the AAP is that most children, black and white, are "normal" and will learn if properly taught. On this issue, so fundamental to every other aspect of the design, Scott made his views known in a speech to a group of young Republicans:

> Let's face the facts. A goodly number of the black kids in this district were not raised in a normal social, political and economic environment, and it may not be an accurate thing to use that terminology--normal--without taking in the full consequences of these other factors.

In answer to an urgent query from the Board of Education as to what precisely his views were on this subject, Scott replied that he believed black children, like other "normal" children, are born with the potential for effective participation in a highly technological society. However, he said, these children had been forced by society into abnormal external environments which handicapped their growth and development.

In subsequent statements, the superintendent also made it clear that he believed it unfair to hold schools and teachers responsible for the failure of students as long as the society in which they live handicapped their development. This view was one which Scott repeated on many other occasions and appeared to represent his beliefs on this subject. What did this mean in terms of the implementation of the AAP? Did Scott plan to adjust the design to fit his philosophy of education? Did he believe that his views invalidated the AAP objectives or was it a matter of allowing children more time to learn the basic skills? The superintendent never addressed these issues, thus allowing others to draw their own conclusions without his guidance or leadership.

Testing

There were other parts of the design which were altered by the superintendent without reference to the effect of such alterations on the project as a whole. The testing program was a case in point. The AAP contained a provision for the regular evaluation of all D.C. students in grades one through

nine on the basis of standardized tests. Scott, strongly supported by the teachers union, did not agree that the achievement of students in the District schools had to be judged against national standards. In a policy statement released to the public before it was discussed with the Board of Education, Scott made the following comment:

> Achievement test results have applicability to the instructional program only insofar as the test has a relationship to the curriculum in the schools. It is important, therefore, that an in-depth study on testing be undertaken to carefully examine testing instruments and their individual test items for their relevance not only to the school curriculum but also to urban school populations.

At that time Scott also announced that the midyear test, specified in the AAP, would be cancelled. Explaining his decision to the board, Scott did not question the usefulness of standardized tests to nearly the same degree as he had in his policy statement, but indicated that he believed two tests a year were sufficient. The money saved on the third test was to be used for an in-depth study of the total testing program and for staff development in the field of testing. It should be noted that since September 1970, a total of only two standardized tests were administered to <u>all</u> students in grades one through nine,--one in May and one in September 1971. Since then standardized tests have been given either in <u>selected</u> grades or to only a sampling of students.

Another issue which the superintendent ignored until he was pressured by the Board of Education was the basis on which student were to be promoted. The District of Columbia, like most other school systems, followed a policy of so-called social promotion, advancing students from one grade to the next according to their age and physical development with little reference to their skills in basic subjects. Thus, it was not at all unusual to have students promoted from the sixth to the seventh grade who were reading at a third- or fourth-grade level. The fact that there was a connection between minimum levels of achievement or between the problems encountered by teachers in heterogeneous classrooms and the promotion policy--issues that were discussed at length in the AAP--was something of which the superintendent was apparently unaware.

<u>Promotion Policy</u>

In any case, when the question of a promotion policy was first raised in relation to the establishment of minimum floors for each grade, the superintendent skirted the issue. Eventually, in response to public and Board of Education criticism of the

lack of clear policies, he established a committee to make recommendations to him. That was in December 1970. In March 1971, the board reminded the superintendent that teachers and principals needed to be informed immediately as to what promotion policies would be in effect in June.

During the next few weeks one statement, pronouncement or report followed another, while the superintendent, his committee and the board tried to agree on a reasonable policy. Suggestions ranged from leaving it up to the teachers, who would be expected to take all factors relating to a child's behavior and achievement into account, to the promotion of students in "non-graded sequences rather than on grade levels."

In a subsequent report to the Board of Education dated May 5, a promotion policy was suggested which would retain students who did not master the established performance levels at the end of grades three, six and nine. The report also stated that "normal students who continually experience retardation in realizing the minimum goals in mathematics and reading will be diagnostically and prescriptively treated at all levels to bring them up to grade level."

This policy was revised a number of times, but still left two important questions unanswered. What was the exact relationship between minimum floors and promotion, i.e., would students who did not perform at the minimum level be held back and if so in what grades? When would the new policy go into effect? There is serious doubt that the superintendent succeeded in establishing any promotion policy at all during his tenure, since in December 1972--over two years after he took office he was still listing implementation of a revised promotion policy as one of his objectives for the next 18 months.

Heterogeneous Grouping

Equally confusing and confused was the administration's approach to heterogeneous grouping, another important component of the AAP and the only one which in fact had been put into effect on the first day of school in the fall of 1970. Although Scott had supported heterogeneous grouping in his preappointment interview with the Board of Education, he had started to voice some reservations in speeches and statements soon after his arrival in Washington. He was reported to have said that the problems created for teachers by heterogeneous grouping were so great that they would not be able to cope with them and adjustments would have to be made.

The superintendent's advisory committee on the AAP, heavily influenced by representatives of the teachers union, had voted nearly unanimously in favor of restoring some form of ability

grouping. This was not a surprising decision since heterogeneous grouping makes great demands on teachers and administrators. Parents also tend to be opposed to it because, whether they consider their child to be at the top or at the bottom of the class, they are afraid that he will not get as much attention from the teacher as he would in a more homogeneous setting. Everyone paid lip service to the concept of heterogeneity, but few supported it in practice, although the Board of Education was on record in favor of it.

Once again, precise policies and instructions were lacking. Each principal was directed "to insure that the integrity of the concept of heterogeneous grouping is maintained throughout his school" and to submit periodic reports describing the status of heterogeneous grouping in each classroom. At the same time, principals were encouraged to "reduce the undesirable and unmanageable extremes which occur when placement is left primarily to chance."

In an attempt to clarify what principals were expected to do, the superintendent issued three more plans each of which, upon closer examination, was found unacceptable and had to be revised. The superintendent's final proposal which was accepted by the Board of Education and circulated to all elementary and junior high school principals as the "definitive statement" divided classes into levels of ability based on test scores. Unlike a previous plan, however, this one provided each classroom with a sufficient number of different levels to ensure considerable heterogeneity.

Some Good Beginnings

There was one important exception to the pattern of delay and confusion with regard to the implementation of the AAP. All summer long the committees on performance objectives and minimum floors for each grade in reading and mathematics had worked hard to try to complete their assignments in time for school opening in the fall. Their reports were ready and had been approved by the acting superintendent at the time Scott took over. In this instance, he did not postpone action; copies of the reports were distributed to principals, supervisors and teachers during the week of November 11. From all accounts, the minimum floors were considered very helpful by most teachers and were used for a variety of objectives. They formed the basis of mobe team activities, staff development programs, the development of criterion referenced tests and became the means of evaluating the progress made by individual students.

Some other recommendations included in the AAP were also implemented to a greater or lesser degree. For example, once the dispute over the September testing program had been settled,

the results of the tests were made public on a school-to-school basis. Many teachers followed the suggestion in the AAP and discussed the tests with students and parents.

Another aspect of the design which was at least partially implemented during that first year was the use of tutors to improve the academic performance of students. According to a report issued by the administration, more than 2,000 tutors were being used by the end of April 1971 compared to only 740 at the beginning of the year. However, most of these were adults recruited from universities and the community and were not students tutoring each other as suggested by the plan.

Reading and math mobe teams existed in almost every school and many of them were functioning effectively, although as late as March 1971 the superintendent told the board that he was still in the process of developing their roles and objectives. It should be noted that in the case of the mobe teams, the superintendent did not accept the recommendation of his advisory committee which had voted in favor of abolishing the teams.

The superintendent and his staff used the board's commitment to the AAP to organize a variety of staff development programs not only for reading and mathematics teachers, but also for other teachers, principals and supervisors. The superintendent requested the Board of Education to authorize seven-and-one-half days of release time for all teachers to be utilized for activities in support of the AAP. Because of financial and other considerations the board approved only a total of three-and-one-half days for this purpose.

In addition to in-school staff development programs, a highly successful summer institute involving about 300 persons from 94 schools was held during the summer of 1971. This program produced a guide to the implementation of the AAP which was an imaginative 300-page book, full of suggestions and ideas on how to improve the academic achievement of students in reading and mathematics. This book was distributed to all schools and is apparently still being used in some of them.

Another publication entitled Design for Academic Excellence--Guidelines for the Teaching of Reading in the Content Areas was produced by a committee which had become concerned over the lack of coordination between the regular classroom teacher, reading specialists and subject teachers. This guidebook was distributed to members of the Board of Education, supervisors and principals at all schools, but apparently it was not widely used.

On the problem of noneducational impediments to learning, which the AAP insisted must be remedied and not used as an alibi for a student's academic deficiencies, a committee report was available as early as August 1970, but was not distributed to the Board of Education or school officials until the end of December. Efforts in this area resulted in an increase in the number of children receiving free breakfasts and lunches and in a city-wide eye-testing program. In addition, there were plans for opening more clothing centers in the fall of 1971. This was a somewhat meager response to the needs of many students for noninstructional supports and was particularly disappointing because it could have become a very effective program. The committee on noneducational impediments to learning was composed of representatives of the major public and private socially oriented organizations in the District as well as of school officials. Everybody who had power and influence and a constituency in the District of Columbia, with the exception of the U.S. Congress, was included in the committee. An opportunity for fresh thought, new approaches and different mechanisms was available. However, the tone of the report was that of a system resentful at being questioned about its effectiveness.

Differentiated Staffing

Another missed opportunity related to the AAP's recommendation on differentiated staffing. The design had emphasized the importance of the classroom teacher in the learning process and his responsibility for the academic performance of his students. It advocated policies that would raise the status and prestige of the teaching profession. One way suggested for accomplishing this was through new approaches to teacher training, certification and employment, and through the development of a differentiated staffing pattern.

Recommendations on these subjects were included in the AAP, but everyone agreed that it would take time to put them into effect if for no other reason than because the salaries of teachers in the District of Columbia were determined by act of Congress. In addition, the Washington Teachers Union, like most unions, was strongly opposed to any form of differentiated staffing. As a result, this component of the AAP was referred to only rarely, and nothing was done about it during the first few months. In his May 1971 report to the Board of Education the superintendent described differentiated staffing as "conceptually sound" and analyzed some of its advantages. He indicated, however, that no action could be taken until it had been submitted as an agenda item in the collective bargaining process between the board and the union.

There it might all have rested, had it not been for a judicial decree issued by Judge Skelley Wright in May 1971 as a follow-up to his earlier ruling in Hobson v. Hansen. Dissatisfied with the progress being made by the D.C. school system, the judge ordered the equalization of per pupil expenditure for teachers' salaries in all elementary schools, stipulating that no school should be allowed to deviate by more than 5 percent from the city-wide average. After noting that he did not believe that teacher remuneration necessarily reflected quality of instruction, the judge invited the Board of Education to develop a new personnel system such as the one recommended in the AAP. However, he insisted that teachers identified as most effective must be distributed evenly throughout the system, no matter what method was used for evaluating them.

After lengthy consideration and against the advice of the superintendent, the Board of Education decided not to appeal the decision of the court. At least some members of the board based their argument in favor of compliance on the hope that the order could be used to advance the concept of differentiated staffing and thus strengthen the AAP.

At this juncture, the board decided to ask the superintendent to produce a plan for compliance to be put into effect by October 1, 1971. It also instructed the administration to develop a way of implementing the personnel phase of the AAP, to become operative no later than September 1972.

The decision of the Board of Education to move ahead on differentiated staffing led to the selection and employment of an experienced consultant, to the establishment of a task force which included the union, the board and the administration and to the creation of a new position with the title of "differentiated staffing coordinator." Although it appears that the position was never filled, meetings and conferences were held and proposals were drafted, discussed and revised. The consultant suggested that the Board of Education should designate some schools as "prototypes," exploring various patterns of differentiated staffing prior to the creation of a city-wide system. He also prepared a timetable for implementation and urged the board and the superintendent and his staff to advance the concepts and plans for such a system. The court decision, he thought:

> Provides the school system with both the rationale and the legal and moral authority for direct intervention into the schools in terms of changing the staff mix. It is clearly an opportunity which, coupled with the management of some other factors, could result in a positive gain for the school system in the attainment of its dual objectives and obligations.

Unfortunately, this exceptional opportunity to bring about changes in traditional attitudes and staffing patterns was not exploited, in spite of the fact that some members of the Board of Education would liked to have done so and that the teachers union--though still in principle opposed to differentiated staffing--was willing to explore new approaches. The reasons for this lack of initiative were not very clear. Possibly they were due to the problems encountered by the school administration in complying with the more immediate requirements of the court order which antagonized a great many people--teachers, parents and administrators--and which left little time and energy for longer range planning.

Another reason was that, unlike some components of the AAP which were being closely watched by the Board of Education, much less attention was focused on differentiated staffing and the plans for its implementation. It was also likely that in this instance, as in others related to the AAP, the majority on the new Board of Education (elected in November 1971) did not want to pressure the superintendent. Since he did not take the initiative in the development of plans for a differentiated staffing system, nothing was done about it.

It is ironic that four years later the Board of Education and the administration were still struggling with the problem of staying in compliance with the court order. But in all that time, they never seized the opportunity to develop a personnel system in which salaries would reflect teacher quality and effectiveness, thus making the court's 5 percent rule meaningful, instead of a source of endless irritation.

The Superintendent and the AAP

A rather confused picture has emerged from this review of what did or did not happen during the first year following the adoption of the AAP by the Board of Education. There was a lot of activity. New committees were created; old ones were enlarged or abolished. AAP coordinators came and went, while reports and memoranda followed each other in quick succession. Policies were formulated, only to be abandoned at the first sign of difficulty or opposition. Through it all, some good things appeared to be happening less by design than because of momentum built up during the summer, pressure from the Board of Education, inquiries from newspaper reporters, and the initiative of individual principals, supervisors and teachers. What was lacking, once the new superintendent had taken over, was the kind of single-minded commitment and hardheaded approach that would have given direction, leadership and confidence to school personnel and to other individuals who supported the design. In addition, the superintendent also failed to convince opponents and sceptics that change was inevitable, that there would be no retreat from the commitment to the AAP and that they might as well give it their support.

The lack of clarity surrounding the superintendent's intentions vis-a-vis the AAP was confounded by his frequent use of such expressions as "total commitment," "unified efforts," "the pursuit of academic excellence," "the fullest utilization of individual and collective talents," and "total participation" in the implementation of the design. Words--in reports, in speeches, in memoranda--became, in large measure, the only reality and a substitute for concerted action.

Whenever Scott was challenged about the lack of progress in the implementation of the AAP, he advanced three explanations:

1. It was impossible to make substantial progress without "some kind of administrative structure at the regional level." The school system had to be decentralized before other problems could be tackled. But even on the issue of decentralization--one which Scott had discussed when he was a candidate for superintendent and for which there was considerable support on the Board of Education and in the community--Scott took his time. It was May before he presented a decentralization plan to the board, only to withdraw it almost at once, "for further modification and clarification," a process which took another year to complete.

2. A second reason used by Scott to explain the slow rate of progress was the initial lack of planning and preparation. "If I was designing the Clark Plan," the superintendent was quoted as saying in November 1970, "I would have probably established a year of preplanning to get the staff ready." Yet when he was specifically encouraged by the Board of Education in February 1971 to inform it if "this was to be a year concentrated on staff development and related activities and not on children." he did not say that this was his intention. Instead he assured the board that the AAP was being implemented, while at the same time stressing the need for planning time, staff development and orientation of the community. According to him, all kinds of things were happening in classrooms and schools, and he was moving as expeditiously as possible to put the plan into effect.

3. The third and perhaps most frequently used explanation was what Scott described as the constant interference by outsiders and by the Board of Education in his attempts to administer the school system. By outsiders the superintendent was referring to Kenneth Clark and his staff and their supporters. But even when Clark resigned his position of consultant to the school system in order to avoid irritating the superintendent, Scott continued to complain about MARC's interference.

Innumerable memoranda between the president and other members of the Board of Education and the superintendent attest to the fact that Scott believed the board was making excessive demands, had unreasonable expectations and in general interfered

with his authority and thus his ability to run the school system. In fact, the Board of Education did pressure the superintendent to keep it informed on the status of the AAP and frequently voiced impatience about the slow rate of progress.

After some months of urging the superintendent to provide the board and the community with a status report and a timetable for implementing the AAP, the board received a document in February 1971 entitled "Report on the Implementation of the Design for Achievement." The members of the board found it unsatisfactory and requested clarification and elaboration of issues it raised. On April 1, the board sent a letter to the superintendent voicing its concern about "the development of the program for the opening of schools in September 1971." In order to facilitate this task, the board promised the superintendent that "until May 5 neither the board nor any committee thereof will require any action or report of you or your staff." The superintendent was also excused from meetings or conferences of the board and its committees.

In the same letter, the board outlined precisely what it expected from the superintendent and from the program he was asked to present. It might be noted here that in December 1972, a newly elected Board of Education, under very different leadership, found it necessary to send a similar request to the superintendent.

What was regarded as interference by the superintendent and some of his supporters on the board and in the community was actually an attempt by Anita Allen and others to rescue the design from total neglect. It can be argued that the Board of Education should have given the superintendent a freer hand. This would have been possible, if either the superintendent had demonstrated early in his term of office that he was determined to put the AAP into effect--if not immediately then in a series of well thought out stages--or if the majority of the Board of Education had discarded its desire to see the design put into operation. Since neither of these circumstances existed, pressure by the board on the superintendent was inevitable.

What was most unfortunate from the point of view of Anita Allen and her supporters was that many members of the community did not understand the relationship between pressure on the superintendent and the fate of the AAP. Her actions were frequently perceived as capricious power plays, unrelated to the central issue of improving the schools.

School Board Elections

At no time was this view more in evidence than during the 1971 school board elections. Although the AAP as such was not an issue in the campaign, the relationship between Anita Allen, who was up for re-election, and the superintendent was one of the major causes of her defeat. She and her board majority were chastised for not giving the superintendent sufficient time and support before criticizing his plans, accomplishments and abilities. Allen was placed in the position of answering these charges, and she spent much of the campaign defending her leadership of the board, her support of the AAP, and her attempts to hold the superintendent accountable.

It was obviously much easier for her opponents to make an issue of her personality than to look behind the rhetoric of Hugh Scott and discuss why a year after the AAP was adopted so little had been accomplished. In fact, Allen's main rival in the election did not even issue a position paper on the AAP. His comments on the plan came in response to audience questions and were usually superficial. He expressed doubts about the value of the design and said that if elected he would ask the board to "start all over again" on an academic improvement plan to replace the "imperfect" one which had been adopted. He was critical of the manner in which the plan had been accepted as board policy and of some of its major provisions, including heterogeneous grouping, differentiated staffing and the testing program.

On at least one occasion, however, he came out in support of the AAP and stated that if elected he would be able to unite the board, end the controversy which hampered its effectiveness, and implement the design. There is no evidence that this one speech represented a change in the candidate's position; it probably suited his campaign strategy at that moment. If the AAP as such was not an important factor in the campaign, it nonetheless influenced the results. Allen's support of the design and insistence on its implementation were interpreted as harassment of Hugh Scott and used against her by her opponents. "Give Scott a Chance" became not only a popular slogan, but the justification for the anti-Allen campaign.

The election was won by Allen's opponent and by a sufficient number of his supporters to give him a majority on the Board of Education. Committed to supporting the superintendent, these board members had no particular allegiance to or interest in the AAP. The election signaled the beginning of the end of the design. Considerations other than the low academic achievement of students gradually came to dominate the policies of the educational system.

THE NEW BOARD

During the next year, the newly organized Board of Education was confronted by many complicated issues which diverted its attention from the problem of how to teach basic reading and mathematics skills to students in the District of Columbia schools. There was an immediate financial and management crisis. At the beginning of the 1972-73 school year, a teachers' strike had to be settled, and by the end of 1972 the board was engaged in lengthy debates on whether to renew the superintendent's contract beyond the original three-year term and, if so, for how long. Each of these issues affected what happened in schools and classrooms, but they were not directly related to the AAP nor to its status in the system.

The single most damaging and far-reaching problem the board had to face was the financial one. It was two-pronged: the alleged existence of a huge budget deficit from previous years and an anticipated deficit for 1971-72, coupled with evidence of mountainous mismanagement within the school system. This made it impossible for the administration to produce the basic data needed to establish viable fiscal policies or reasonable educational priorities.

Past and current deficits were estimated by the school budget officer to be in the neighborhood of $12 million. But what was equally disturbing to the Board of Education, the City Council, the mayor and the Congress was what the superintendent himself described as a total breakdown of the control system. Administration and management had deteriorated to the point that the school system could not even provide information on how many employees it had or on how much money was being spent and for what purposes. A special task force appointed by the mayor reported that although it did not find evidence of overspending in previous years, the system was headed towards a $3 million deficit for the 1972 fiscal year. Thereupon, the Board of Education was ordered by the mayor to take immediate steps to bring about "constructive change."

This problem affected the implementation of the AAP in three ways. First, everyone was preoccupied with finances and paid scant attention to other issues. Second, the required reduction in spending led to a freeze on hiring, a cutback on school supplies, repairs and programs and a cancellation of the spring testing program. Third, administrators

who might have helped with staff development, assisted in the implementation of various components of the AAP or supervised the activities of the mobe teams were detailed to classrooms as substitute teachers.

Another fallout of this crisis was the increasingly strained relations between the superintendent and the board which held him responsible in spite of the earlier "Give Scott a Chance" slogans. It is almost certainly true that it was Scott's mismanagement of the system's finances which eventually led to his downfall.

As far as the AAP was concerned, it is as difficult in retrospect to understand what was going on as it was to understand it at the time. On the one hand, a memorandum of understanding between the new board and the superintendent issued in March 1972 and designed to lead to more harmonious relations between the board and superintendent never mentioned the AAP, although it reaffirmed the system's commitment to "educational excellence for children in the District of Columbia." On the other hand, the superintendent's rhetoric favoring the design remained, as did the pretense that the AAP was being implemented, evaluated, assessed and reviewed.

A number of documents--some of them originally requested from the superintendent by Anita Allen when she was board president--were circulated between January 1972 and June 1973. They all had certain common characteristics: They described implementation in terms which left doubts as to what had happened in the past, what was happening at the time the report was issued, and what was expected to happen in the future. The confusion of tenses in many of these documents was clearly not accidental. Furthermore, a close analysis indicated that programs referred to as operational in one report were discussed as projected activities in a later report.

The single most confusing document released during this period was a report entitled "The Academic Achievement Project, 1971-1972," which was dated July 1972. Purporting to be a comprehensive analysis by the school system of how it was carrying out the provisions of the AAP, it could more accurately be characterized as a piece of propaganda which told the public what the administration thought it wanted to hear. A senior official who had worked on the report at the time described it subsequently as "nothing but a sham." It was a fairly sophisticated document which successfully masked the lack of real progress by a barrage of words and charts. Thus, for example, the activities conducted by the school system were said to have resulted in more classrooms becoming:

> Humanistically oriented; learner directed, skill focused; focused on student-teacher interactions and functional learning centers using a variety of instructional strategies, techniques and methods.

The report also stated that the implementation efforts had increased as teachers and administrators "pointed students in the direction of the 'achievement ethic.'"

The fact that standardized tests for all students had been abandoned was disguised by lengthy descriptions of the criterion referenced tests which were being developed and used. The report described in detail the results of various surveys conducted by the administration among principals, teachers and students, including on-site evaluations. Taken at face value, this section of the document would lead one to believe that the AAP was in full swing, at least in most elementary schools in the District. But the figures were too high to be believable. For example: All 148 schools surveyed, including elementary and junior high schools, stated that they had reading and math mobe teams in October 1971 and, with two exceptions, all schools reporting in June again stated that their mobe teams were in full operation. Similarly, all principals reported that all classrooms in their buildings were heterogeneously organized. According to the reports of elementary school principals for May 1972, all components of the AAP were considered, on average, to be "fully operational" with the exception of university liaison and homework centers.

Few people associated with the school system would have been willing to vouch for the accuracy of these evaluations. Suspicion as to the validity of the reports is reinforced when one reads on the one hand that the noninstructional components of the AAP were fully operational, while, on the other hand, one was told that "a significant number of students were not receiving needed health services." Figures, which show that in 20 randomly selected schools (16 elementary and four junior high schools) one-half of all sixth graders and one-third of the junior high school students received tutoring, are also open to question since no comprehensive student-to-student tutoring program existed during this period.

Had Anita Allen still been president of the board, this report would have been reviewed and analyzed page by page, and the board would have insisted on proof that the accomplishments described were based on reality. Even so, many board members had serious doubts about what was actually happening in the schools regarding the AAP, but at the time they preferred not to raise the issue or challenge the superintendent's optimistic

review. It was not until they became dissatisfied with Scott on other grounds and were contemplating the renewal of his contract that they voiced their doubts about what had actually been accomplished by the school system during the previous two years.

After months of intra-board disagreements about the performance of the superintendent and the likelihood that his request for a one-year contract extension would be turned down, Scott withdrew his request. It was one of the more fascinating ironies of this period that in the final "Report to the Community" in which Scott summarized his activities during his two-and-one-half years in the District of Columbia, he listed the implementation of the AAP as his major accomplishment--in spite of the fact that once again a supposedly authoritative report left in doubt the actual status of many of the projects claimed as successes.

At the end as at the beginning, the superintendent's own philosophy of education remained at variance with that expressed in the AAP. The failures of the school system were once more ascribed by him to the socioeconomic handicaps which afflicted black children and made them incapable of learning and performing like other children.

ANATOMY OF A FAILURE

Many questions have been raised about the Academic Achievement Project both by those directly or indirectly involved in the District of Columbia and by outsiders. What these individuals want to know most of all is what happened to the design. Why did it fail? Was failure inevitable and if so why? Could it succeed somewhere else and if so under what circumstances? Did it have any influence at all on the educational system in the District? Why was the rhetoric of support for the AAP retained by those who, like the superintendent, had effectively undermined the project? Was there perhaps something so inherently attractive about the concept of teaching children reading, writing and arithmetic, that lip service had to be paid to the project even while other objectives were given priority?

For most of these questions there are no precise answers, and even well informed speculation has its limitations. Nonetheless, it is worth trying to analyze why things happened as they did.

Members of the MARC staff were sometimes asked how they could be so certain that the design had died years ago in Washington, D.C. For a long while the best answer was to point

to the lack of tangible classroom evidence and to quote members of the Board of Education, teachers or administrators all of whom readily admitted that very little of the AAP remained in the schools.

More recent evidence was provided by the fact that during the search for a new superintendent for the District of Columbia in the spring and summer of 1973, the AAP was never mentioned by anyone. None of the final candidates had been given copies of the design nor was questioned about the issues raised by the plan. The new superintendent probably had never even heard of the design for academic achievement--in any case she has never referred to it in public; nor has anyone else during the past few years. For all intents and purposes, the important new policy thrust adopted by the Board of Education in 1970 and supported in theory and words by a superintendent and his staff up to his final report published in 1973 had disappeared without a trace. Why?

Perhaps a word should be said first about the design itself and the extent to which it might have been responsible for its own demise. Leaving aside for the moment the issue of timing, it is difficult to see what was wrong with it or how changing it might have made a difference. It was a highly flexible design except in its commitment to basic skills and high standards. It outlined certain prerequisites for the achievement of academic excellence, but even where it was most specific, there was room for adjustment, as for example, on the subject of differentiated staffing. In short, the plan presented a reasonable and sound approach to the problem of improving the academic achievement of public school students.

As to the milieu into which the design was introduced, it has been argued that circumstances existing in the District of Columbia were such as to make it a particularly difficult setting for an educational program like the AAP. Some of the reasons cited in support of this point of view were:

1. The District of Columbia is a large, urban school system with all the usual problems associated with such systems.

2. In addition and in contrast to many other large cities, the District of Columbia has an overwhelmingly black school system. If one subscribes to the racist view on issues of education which assumes that black children present special educational problems because, in the words of Superintendent Scott, they had been forced by society into abnormal external environments which handicapped their growth and development, then the District of Columbia schools might indeed have seemed to be a difficult terrain for a program like the AAP.

3. The third reason why the D.C. school system was considered by some to present a particular problem is the fact that until 1974 it did not have its own governmental institutions but was ruled by Congress and the federal government.

These factors have been mentioned frequently to explain or justify the failure of the D.C. schools to teach students what they need to know and the failure to implement the AAP successfully. In MARC's view, neither size nor racial composition would make it any more difficult to administer an effective school system in the District of Columbia than in any other large urban center. On the contrary, the District might be expected to have certain advantages over cities where integration and segregation, busing and equal opportunity for minority students are major disruptive issues.

There is one aspect of the racial make-up of the District schools which might be cited as a reason for the failure of the AAP in Washington, although it was rarely mentioned publicly--the attitude of a white power structure toward the plight of black children. Whether it is labeled "benign neglect," lack of sensitivity or disinterest, there is ample evidence to show that our society reacts towards the educational needs of minority and poor children differently from the way it responds to the needs of white, middle-class children. The rhetoric of concern and of equal educational opportunity appears non-racist. But actions differ. For example, when reading and writing scores dropped below their usual high levels in suburban Montgomery County (though they were still considerably above the national norm), compulsory county-wide measures were immediately adopted to remedy the situation. No such determined, all encompassing action was ever taken to bring public school students in the District of Columbia to grade norm in reading and mathematics.

The third contention was that the District's political dependence on Congress made the school system 1) less well financed and 2) vulnerable to political maneuvering. As far as school financing was concerned, per-pupil expenditure in the District was higher than in many other urban school systems and higher than in most of the surrounding counties. But the lack of self-government and of popularly elected government officials in the District of Columbia had made the school board the main focus of District politics, resulting in the intrusion of non-educational issues into school board elections and the politicizing of the school board itself.

On balance, unless one believes that no large urban school system can be improved, the failure of the AAP or rather its abandonment cannot be explained simply in terms of the peculiarities of the District of Columbia as a social, economic, racial or political entity.

There were obviously many different reasons for the death of the AAP, and no one involved with education in the District from 1970-1973 can escape sharing some of the responsibility. But there were certain individuals and groups who because of position, status or influence could perhaps have made a difference. Foremost among these were the Board of Education, the superintendent and his senior staff, the teachers union, parents and the community. There was also MARC which, in retrospect, might have been able to play a somewhat different role.

I. The Board of Education

The primary responsibility for the educational system of the District of Columbia is vested in the 11 elected members of the Board of Education. The first elected board was sworn into office in January 1969. A year later Anita Allen became president of the Board of Education and shortly afterwards made the contacts with MARC which led to the development of the AAP.

Everything about the Board of Education was complex: Its internal politics, its relation to the City Council, the mayor, and the White House; the personal relationships between individual board members and groups of members; the differences in educational philosophy, in racial, economic and social background, in intellectual caliber, and in the individual attitudes of its members. The board was viewed by the public as unpredictable, unreliable and inexperienced. Personal hostilities tended to keep public meetings of the board in an uproar and gave the board members a reputation for lack of concern about students and their education.

Much of the criticism leveled against the board involved style of operation rather than the substance of policies. Disagreements between members were frequently blown out of all proportion by the news media or by the claques of individual board members. In fact, most of the serious work of the board, then as now, was not transacted in public meetings at all and would never have become the subject of public controversy, had it not been for the political interests of individual members. Thus, the actual failures of the board, insofar as the AAP was concerned, were rarely revealed in the public arena and were not those most frequently discussed in the press.

The board's responsibility for the demise of the design for academic achievement was, in very general terms, due to a lack of commitment to the AAP, an absence of consensus, an exaggerated concern with personal popularity and lack of courage. But there also were much more specific reasons why the board must be held responsible for what happened to the AAP.

1. Choice of Superintendent. The board or at least many of its members were well aware of the qualities a superintendent needed to be effective. Among those specifically listed by the board before it began its search was administrative experience in an educational enterprise approximately equivalent to that of the D.C. school system. The board had also decided at the time it agreed to proceed with the request to Kenneth Clark to draw up an academic achievement plan that candidates for the position of superintendent would be interviewed in terms of that plan. This approach was reaffirmed when the AAP was adopted, and all finalists among the candidates were sent copies of the design before their final interview. Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, the board was persuaded by rhetoric and did not probe deeply into the candidates' comprehension of or commitment to the concepts and educational philosophy on which the AAP was based.

Ignoring their own guidelines for choosing the new superintendent, the board settled for a candidate, with limited administrative experience. They apparently hoped that Hugh Scott's unquestioning, gung-ho attitude would compensate for his inexperience. Wanting the position very much Scott was able to persuade a majority of members that he was the right man for the job. Final proof of the fact that he was not the right man was provided not only by his failure to implement board policy with respect to the AAP, but also by the decision of a succeeding board not to extend his three-year contract.

2. Lack of Understanding of and/or support for the AAP. To be in favor of raising the academic achievement of inner-city children was somewhat like being in favor of peace. Everybody was for it, at least in principle. But at what price? At the price of heterogeneous grouping of classrooms? At the risk of offending the teachers union? At the cost of providing extra funds for staff development or for teachers' aides?

While favoring the AAP in principle and with words the board frequently found it desirable to hedge on its support of various parts of the plan. The interdependence of the components of the design and its basic philosophy were never understood clearly enough by every member to enable the board to present a solid front on the issue of implementation.

Some, for example, did not want to antagonize the union leadership and thus tended to oppose such parts of the design as heterogeneous grouping and teacher accountability. Other members, reflecting a more permissive view of education, were worried about the emphasis on competition, strict student evaluation and basic skills. One question frequently raised at public meetings, particularly in the more affluent parts of the city, was whether the emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics meant that other subjects such as social studies

or biology would be neglected. Other special interests of board members, such as school decentralization, the reading clinic, the "Anacostia project" or enrichment programs, also took precedence over the need to implement the design as an interdependent entity. The board, therefore, was only rarely able to take decisive action in support of the AAP.

As a result of this lack of unanimity among board members, individuals and groups both inside and outside the educational establishment were able to chip away at the parts of the AAP with which they disagreed and thereby undermine the entire design.

3. Unrealistic Expectations. The Board of Education failed to come to terms with the financing of the AAP. Although Kenneth Clark had stated that he did not believe that implementation would require large amounts of additional funds, he had not said that reallocation and redistribution of available funds might not be required. The board seemed singularly unconcerned about money and this gave their support of the AAP a tone of unreality. Except for the $700,000 authorized in August 1970 for the testing program, there was little board discussion about costs, and no monies were earmarked by the board for the AAP during the first crucial year. This enabled administrators to argue that the board was unrealistic in its expectations regarding the cost of the AAP.

Given the fiscal crunch in the District of Columbia and the control of the school budget by the Congress, money for the AAP would have had to come from other educational programs or activities. But the board took no initiative to reallocate funds in spite of the fact that the political risks involved in doing so would have been comparatively few; the budget and accounting process of the school system was so chaotic that no one apparently knew what was being spent by whom, on what, and from which sources.

The board was perhaps also unrealistic in its assumption that no extraordinary efforts would be required of it to bring the design into operation and that having adopted the AAP, the school administration would be able to carry the ball by itself.

4. Lack of Political Sophistication. The lack of realism on the part of board members was combined with a certain lack of sophistication about the use of power and influence. A solid majority of the board supported the AAP during the first 18 months and yet no orgarized effort was made to gain friends and supporters for the project. The initiative was allowed to go by default to the opponents of the design. When the issues were discussed and debated in the community and the media, they were defined by those who, like the leadership of the teachers union, wanted to see it defeated not implemented.

At one point during the summer, the president of the Board of Education discussed the possibility of mounting an active public relations/information program on behalf of the AAP. A proposal was solicited from a public relations firm. However, objections to such a program were raised by members of the school administration, particularly by the director of public relations and some of his followers, and the idea was dropped. An attempt was also made by the president of the board and one or two other members to solicit congressional and District government support for the AAP. Congressmen and senators were contacted and some at least indicated interest in the project, although no action was taken.

No high level community group on the AAP was created by the board to advise it on how best to gain public acceptance for the design, nor were the media, particularly television, used as effectively as they might have been.

The issue of how best to inform the public about the AAP was made more difficult for the board by three other circumstances: 1) the lack of a sufficient number of copies of the design at the time of its adoption, which meant that most individuals inside as well as outside the school system had to get the information about it second hand; 2) the fact that the AAP was adopted during the summer when many people were on vacation, schools were closed and there was little organized activity through which to reach teachers, parents, students and the community; 3) the board had no professional staff of its own and therefore had to rely on others to provide necessary information and analysis.

Nonetheless, the board could and should have done more to solicit the support of those with power and influence on behalf of the design.

5. Relationship with the School Administration. The relationship between the board and the superintendent is an infinitely complicated subject touching on every aspect of the AAP from the moment of its adoption--or even its conception--to its final abandonment. It involves an understanding of the history of the Board of Education and the D.C. school system, the relationships of individuals to one another and to others inside and outside the school system, law suits, the educational bureaucracy, and racial and social attitudes.

An analysis of these and other factors might yield additional insights into what went wrong with the AAP below the surface and would constitute a fascinating case study of educational administration. It is, however, beyond the scope of this report, and although it would be interesting, it is not essential to the present discussion.

The fate of the AAP was imperiled at the outset by the uncertainties surrounding the selection and appointment of a superintendent and later by the difficulties which developed between Hugh Scott and the board on a variety of issues, including the role of MARC and of Kenneth Clark. In one sense, the AAP was the cause of some of these problems because it presented clear, simple-to-comprehend objectives which the board insisted should be adopted by the administration. In another sense, however, the AAP was also the victim of the increasing friction between the board and the school administration.

During Anita Allen's term as president, lack of progress in implementing the design was a source of constant irritation. After her defeat the board worked on the assumption that, left to his own devices and free of "harassment," the superintendent would be able to succeed in raising the academic achievement of the students either with or without the design. However, neither the Allen board nor the next board succeeded in having the AAP implemented or the educational system improved.

One cannot conclude a discussion of the Board of Education's role in relation to the AAP without making some comments about the president, Anita Allen. There can be no question that her anguish about the low achievement level of children in the D.C. public schools led to the development of the AAP and kept it alive during the 16 months prior to her defeat at the polls in November 1971. Most of the critical comments made earlier about the board and its members do not apply to her. In particular, she did not support the appointment of Hugh Scott as superintendent realizing that his lack of commitment to and understanding of the design as well as his lack of administrative experience would be serious handicaps. However, for reasons connected with the appointment of the previous superintendent, Allen did not play as active a part in the search for a new superintendent as might have been desirable.

Once the superintendent had been installed in office, Allen made a concerted effort to support him and to give him an opportunity to implement the AAP in whatever way he considered best. Even most of her enemies realized that she was interested essentially in only one thing: to help children in the schools perform at a level of excellence that would enable them to compete in the world beyond the school walls. To that end she was willing to use her time and talents, and she had no patience, literally and figuratively, with those whose agendas were different.

When it became clear that resistance to the implementation of the AAP was generated at the top level of the school administration, she attempted to overcome this opposition by a display of interest, commitment and tenacity which frightened a

city unaccustomed to seeing self-confident and determined black women in the public arena. She was criticized ad nauseam for harassing the superintendent when, in fact, she was doing nothing more than holding him accountable for implementing the policies of the board. Difficulties frequently were based on the fact that Allen understood more clearly than either the Board of Education or the school administration what was required to put the AAP into effect. When she saw that nothing was happening, she leaned hard on the superintendent and his staff.

In retrospect, one wonders whether Anita Allen could have found a way of being more effective in the pursuit of her goals. Certainly her attempt to mount a public relations and information program on behalf of the AAP was a step in the right direction and would have been worth pursuing, even in the face of opposition. Along the same lines, she perhaps could have put together a coalition for the AAP which would have broadened its base of support and taken the initiative away from its opponents. Similarly, she might have been able to force the hand of the administration (as she in fact had done with regard to the testing program) by taking the initiative in asking for the reprogramming of existing funds for purposes of implementing the AAP or in trying to get new funds from government or private sources for this purpose.

The problem for Anita Allen was that she was caught on the horns of an intolerable dilemma. If she pushed the board into a leadership role in relation to the AAP, she was censured for interfering in the job of the superintendent, and her efforts were resisted by the administration and by her opponents on the board. If on the other hand she curtailed her questioning and criticism, nothing at all happened.

It was a tragic situation, with the children and their education as the pawns.

II. The Superintendent and his Administration

It is the view of many individuals in Washington--inside and outside the school system--that the AAP was sabotaged by the Washington Teachers Union and stabbed in the back by Superintendent Scott. How accurate was this perception of the superintendent's role? There was much about Hugh Scott that was exceedingly misleading, not the least of which was his uncanny ability to turn even the most damaging events to his advantage and to land on his feet. As a long-time Scott watcher said in a private interview, "I would bet you that there is not more than a handful of people inside the administration who do not believe that Scott resigned his position because that is what he wanted to do rather than that he was fired by the Board of Education." He was apparently able to persuade

most people that he was doing all he could to improve the educational system in the District and that "others" were responsible for whatever was not working properly, be it test scores or his relationship with the Board of Education. It is difficult to know whether his persuasiveness was due to his affability, his sense of what people wanted to hear, his "blackness" in a white power structure, or his bravado in the face of adversity, but it is one part of his character which needs to be understood.

It is equally if not more important to realize, however, that what any school system needs is not affability but leadership--something which Hugh Scott was unable to provide. What made the need particularly urgent in the District of Columbia was the fact that a leadership vacuum had existed since Carl Hansen had resigned as superintendent in 1967. In the ensuing three years, the system was twice headed by Dr. Benjamin Henley as acting superintendent and once by a superintendent who was removed from office after a period of only eight months. This quick succession of superintendents affected every aspect of school policies and administration, skewed the relationship between the board and senior school officials and made system-wide, long-range planning exceedingly difficult.

The advent of a new superintendent after a comprehensive search and a sophisticated selection process was expected to provide Washington with a new opportunity to improve its school system. Hugh Scott was perceived by the community as an experienced young black administrator with a reputation for having put into operation a successful reading program for inner-city children in Detroit. He had a great deal going for him, including the existence of a comprehensive plan for improvement of instruction in the elementary and junior high schools to which the Board of Education was committed, a commitment which could have been used by the superintendent to enhance his own reputation.

On the basis of everything we know, have read, heard and observed during the three years of the Scott superintendency it appears that he never understood the possibilities available to him and thus was not able to exploit them. The opportunities for change, for improvement, for renewal all but disappeared in an avalanche of ego tripping. He seemed mesmerized by his theme, "I am the superintendent!"

Two major weaknesses affected Hugh Scott's performance: his lack of administrative experience and his lack of self-confidence which not only prevented him from searching for and accepting the assistance he needed, but made him retreat in the face of opposition and give up when his actions were challenged. As Scott himself has stated, he desperately

wanted the job and once having attained that goal he wanted to be a success. "I have never been associated with failure," he told his audiences, and he looked for approval and acclaim wherever he went. This strategy left him open to pressures from all sides and left the educational system without the strong, focused, determined leadership which it so desperately needed. The superintendent's relations with the Board of Education during his first 15 months in office were defined by his resentment of the fact that he had not been the first choice of the president of the board. Similarly he never forgot that Kenneth Clark had supported another man for the job of superintendent. This clearly influenced his relations with MARC, but more importantly it determined his approach to the AAP even prior to the arrival in Washington.

In the context of the Washington school system, Hugh Scott perceived the AAP as a threat to his authority and Kenneth Clark as a rival--a potential source of power and influence whom he wanted to discredit. Those people who supported the AAP and wished to see it put into operation, he accused of harassment.

The record abounded with examples of how successful this strategy turned out to be, although in the end it benefited neither the school system nor the superintendent himself. Having banished the AAP without a plan or program to take its place, the superintendent was faced by problems--financial, programmatic, political--which he was too inexperienced to solve. It was no accident that one coordinator after another and one committee after another were appointed; that memoranda followed each other in quick succession and that reports were turned out which were unrelated to what was actually happening in the schools. Statements on such issues as promotion, decentralization and testing were issued and, when challenged, were withdrawn until it was difficult for anyone to get a clear picture of what policies or programs had been discarded or put into effect. More and more frequently, as time went on, the superintendent took refuge in the assertion that the academic achievement of D.C. students was limited by the social and economic factors in their lives and in the society over which schools had no control.

Asked in a television interview at the end of his term what he considered the major achievement of his nearly three years as superintendent, Scott pointed to the more efficient delivery of supplies, the greater tranquility in the schools, the almost completed plans for decentralization and a more rational system of financial accounting. However, in his final written report to the community he took credit--as he had always done--for the implementation of the AAP.

To the end, in both his written and oral presentations, Hugh Scott blamed the city, the Board of Education, the Congress and socioeconomic factors for whatever was still amiss in the educational system of the District of Columbia.

An analysis of the role played in relation to the AAP by some of the other senior school officials, principals and teachers showed that attitudes toward the project varied. There were those who felt left out because they had not been consulted prior to the adoption of the AAP. There were others who looked with suspicion on any major change in the school system, while still others had their own pet projects which they were afraid would be buried by the AAP steamroller. Differences in educational philosophy, in personal loyalties and in perceptions about the educability of black, inner-city students also affected how school personnel viewed the AAP. There certainly were some administrators, principals and teachers who from the beginning supported the design and wanted to see it put into effect.

It is probably true to say that the majority of school personnel adopted a wait-and-see attitude--willing to pitch in to make the design work or to remain uninvolved, depending on the signals given by the new superintendent. When the signals turned out to be uncertain and ambiguous and when it became clear that the AAP had little or no support from the superintendent, the program was allowed to slip from highest priority status to no status at all. The lack of commitment by Superintendent Scott was made very clear to those administrators who worked in close proximity to him and they took their cues from him. Many participated actively in the charade of reports and documents released by the superintendent, while others watched in dismay.

When we inquired from some individuals in this latter category why they did not speak up and protest, we were given a number of answers which reflected fears about job security or about being made to look like a fool in public by the superintendent. "We could tell which way the wind was blowing," we were told, "and we were skeptical about the extent to which we could count on the support of the board in a confrontation with the superintendent." The bandwagon belonged to the superintendent and most members of the staff thought it prudent not to get in the way.

III. The Washington Teachers Union

There were other groups and individuals who, had they played different roles, might also have made a difference. Foremost among these was the Washington Teachers Union. As has been discussed in some detail earlier, the union had practical as well as philosophical reservations about the AAP.

Like the superintendent, the union had neither a plan of its own nor specific suggestions on how the design could be improved. Instead it based its opposition on the following grounds: 1) the union had not been consulted prior to the adoption of the AAP and 2) the union was opposed to all suggestions that teachers should be held accountable for the performance of their students, and they therefore opposed testing, teacher evaluation and, to a certain extent, staff differentiation 3) the poor and minorities never get a fair shake in a capitalist society and it was therefore useless for an educational system to teach children skills which they would not get a chance to employ. This view of the uselessness of education was not widely shared by union members, but did influence the leadership at the time. Although its chief exponent left Washington in 1971, the outlook served as one more diversion from serious concentration on the AAP.

There is no doubt that many teachers felt threatened by the program and its suggestion of accountability. They opposed heterogeneous grouping because it required more effort and more skill on the part of teachers, and they disliked any suggestion of a differentiated staffing system which was invariably characterized as "merit pay."

The union leadership used the AAP to demonstrate its power in the system and gloated over its success in helping to kill the program. The union also believed, with some justification, that it had succeeded in intimidating the superintendent, and thus it was a strong supporter of Hugh Scott and an outspoken opponent of Anita Allen who was the only power center in the school system which the union was unable to control.

This may be an oversimplified explanation of the union's role in the nonimplementation of the AAP, but we think that it describes accurately the behavior of the leadership and the influence it exerted. The union's early and continuous opposition, its threats, intimidations and callous power plays certainly crippled the plan to a degree where only the most concerted and committed counteroffensive might have been able to save it. No such offensive was mounted by the media, the parents, the community or by anyone else.

IV. The Media

The role of the media in the life and death of the AAP was complex. As indicated earlier, the design was given a positive reception when it was first introduced, partly because there was general agreement that public education in the District of Columbia was in serious trouble. In the words of a Washington Post editorial "drastic reforms are manifestly needed." Another factor was the deference for Kenneth Clark who

had a nationwide reputation for concern about the education of minority children. Also the AAP's emphasis on basic skills and particularly on reading was considered by some to be most appropriate to the needs of public school students.

In addition to supporting the AAP in columns and editorials, the media and particularly the Washington Post did an excellent job during the summer of analyzing the design and commenting on plans for its implementation. The AAP and its objectives were mentioned in almost every report dealing with education in the District, especially in relation to the search for a new superintendent.

The quality of reporting on the AAP remained consistently above average. Moreover, it was frequently the questions raised by reporters that called the attention of the Board of Education and the public to what was or was not being done by the superintendent and his staff. In contrast, the editorial policies of the media became increasingly hostile to the AAP once the new superintendent arrived. The leadership of the three newspapers and, to a certain extent, the managers of the local radio and television news programs focused attention on the criticism leveled against the AAP and especially on the so-called personality conflicts which were said to exist between Hugh Scott and Kenneth Clark, and Scott and Anita Allen. The fact that the controversy was caused by fundamental disagreements about education and about the objectives of the design was usually obscured. The media had decided that the new superintendent not only deserved a chance, but also uncritical support, and thus were hostile to anyone who presumed to find fault with his administration.

Under the guise of sincere concern for the school children of the District and the desire to back up the newly arrived superintendent, editors of the Washington Post in particular refused to look behind the rhetoric and the pretenses and ask what was happening to the reading program or the tutoring projects or the commitment to heterogeneous grouping. Far from playing a positive role in the effort to put the AAP into effect, the media concentrated on personalities and controversies. This approach contributed in no small way to a lack of community support for the AAP, although it undoubtedly also reflected a lack of popular support for the design.

V. The Community

The entire issue of community support for the AAP is complicated by the usual difficulty of defining what a community is and also by a particular difficulty in defining the Washington community. Many influential Washingtonians consider themselves to be transients in the nation's capital rather than members of an urban community.

The original public response to the design was quite favorable although the method by which it was adopted was questioned from the outset. One of the groups which objected most strenuously to this procedure was the influential D.C. Citizens for Better Public Education. Whether this group or others would in the long run have been more supportive if procedures had been different is debatable. But the fact that D.C. Citizens could fault the Board of Education for adopting the design without having held extensive public hearings gave it an acceptable public excuse for opposing the AAP.

The D.C. Citizens for Better Public Education must be given credit for publishing a concise and useful four-page summary of the AAP which was widely circulated and read and for discussing some of the issues connected with the AAP in its monthly newsletters. This was an organization which could easily have played an important supportive role in the implementation of the AAP--it had influence and resources inside and outside the school system--if it had decided to become an advocate of school reform and a champion of the needs of lower status children. Instead, it reflected the interests of the majority of its most active members who were opposed to heterogeneous grouping, worried about their own children being shortchanged by the design and who favored "innovative programs" such as open classrooms, rather than emphasis on reading and mathematics.

The D.C. Citizens was also very much concerned about where funds for the programs would come from and how "normal" children would be identified. Most of all, the organization did not want to risk antagonizing anyone with power and influence. It joined the forces opposed to the AAP, Anita Allen and Kenneth Clark.

Other sectors of the community including, for example, the PTA and particularly its president supported the design at the beginning and spoke out on its behalf in the disputes on testing between the union and the Board of Education. However, with a few exceptions strong public support fell silent when it became clear that the new superintendent was at best lukewarm toward the program. It was as if these groups tried to avoid a confrontation with the superintendent and therefore chose to avert their minds from the issues raised by the design. Community organizations like the NAACP, the Urban League and the Washington, D.C. Urban Coalition, for instance, did not consider it necessary to speak out on behalf of the AAP.

Some attempts were made by individuals to mobilize black parents in support of the AAP. Sporadic meetings were held, letters to editors written, and questions asked of the administration and at board meetings. But no organized, sustained effort was mounted by black parents or citizens groups in support of the academic achievement project.

Equally, if not more important in terms of community attitudes and actions, was the silence of the mayor and of the members of the City Council. Far from declaring a "reading mobilization year" or speaking out forcefully on behalf of the AAP, the mayor remained aloof. Requests for support of the program by the Board of Education from the city government resulted in a single letter being written on its behalf.

Like the media, the community and its leadership welcomed the AAP when it was first introduced and support for it implied no obligations or controversies. When support began to require taking positions on issues and on people, the community found excuses to change its stance.

This was particularly true after it became apparent that active support for the AAP was interpreted by the new superintendent and his followers as opposition to his leadership. The community appeared determined to "Give Scott a Chance," even when this approach failed to produce improvements in academic performance or provide sound educational leadership.

The attempt to characterize attitudes towards the AAP as indicative of loyalty to the superintendent began a few weeks after Hugh Scott's arrival in Washington. Kenneth Clark, who had been engaged as a consultant by the Board of Educaton, publicly warned that the AAP was in the process of being interred by "bureaucratic inertia and vested interests." Although Clark made it clear that he was referring as much to union opposition and parent lethargy as to the shortcomings of the school administration, the speech was widely interpreted as an attack on Scott. While denying the existence of a rift between Kenneth Clark and himself, Scott was able to capitalize on the role of the underdog. The citizens of the District of Columbia were so eager to have a successful superintendent that they were willing to close their eyes to his shortcomings and to dismiss all criticism of his abilities and performance as unwarranted harassment.

Perhaps it would have been possible to find some way to arouse parents and the community in support of the plan as Kenneth Clark, Washington Post columnist Bill Raspberry, and some other individuals tried to do through speeches and articles

on more than one occasion. But no way was found, and the field was left to the union, the superintendent, the plan's opponents on the board and among the citizenry, and to the news media, who among them let it fall by the wayside or actively conspired against it.

VI. MARC

When it comes to analyzing the role played by MARC in the abandonment of the AAP, we are at an obvious disadvantage in assessing ourselves. Yet there are aspects of MARC's involvement which need to be discussed and evaluated. A case can and has been made for either one of two propositions, or for a combination of both. Proposition one: That MARC was too much involved in the post-adoption phase of the AAP particularly after the new superintendent came into office. Proposition two: That MARC should have been involved more rather than less, particularly in the early stages of implementation.

The following arguments are made in support of the first proposition: a) that the continued involvement of MARC did not allow administrators the necessary leeway to plan implementation on the basis of their own best judgement: b) that the intimate association of Clark with the AAP in the minds of the community gave opponents an opportunity to attack the plan by attacking Clark's personal motives (rumor had it that he wanted to be superintendent); by citing his previous involvement and supposed failure in attempts to upgrade New York city schools; by accusing MARC of having received large sums of money for the AAP and by other equally inaccurate accusations; c) that because of MARC's close working relationship with the president of the Board of Education, the design became embroiled in the board's internal disputes and a victim of board politics; d) that Clark's continued involvement and particularly his criticism of the superintendent's attitude towards the AAP brought new support to the superintendent and further weakened the implementation of the design; and e) that the association of Anita Allen with MARC and the AAP and her identification by the public as an opponent of the superintendent helped to bring about her defeat in the 1971 school board elections and, with her defeat, the abandonment of the program.

The opposite proposition is supported by the following arguments:

a) That MARC could and should have provided assistance and technical expertise to the school system at the start of the program. For instance, MARC might have funded the immediate publication of enough copies of the AAP to provide one for every teacher in the system. Similarly, MARC might have

not only suggested but organized and funded a meeting or meetings of school officials for the purpose of discussing the plan and fostering cooperation in the development of plans for implementation. A two- or three-day meeting at a conference center between MARC staff and 50 of the top school officials might have taken the initiative away from the teachers union, diffused some of the criticism, and strengthened support for the design.

b) That although MARC stated and restated its belief that the implementation of the design was the responsibility of the board and the administration--as it in fact should have been--this was based on assumptions which turned out to be unrealistic. MARC's expertise not only in relation to the AAP but in the field of urban education generally, could have been put to good use in the early weeks of the project, before the new superintendent arrived on the scene. Problems which arose in relation to heterogeneous grouping or the use of tests to evaluate teachers, for instance, might have been resolved more easily if MARC had been in constant and direct touch with school officials. A MARC presence within the system might have been able to anticipate problems and assist in finding solutions before these problems became major policy issues.

c) That MARC could have used Kenneth Clark's prestige and national reputation to influence the public more directly and to try to create solid understanding of and support for the design. This would have made it more difficult for the opposition to succeed in its campaign.

d) That given the weakness of the administrative arrangements and the lack of consensus on the Board of Education, MARC and particularly its Washington staff should have acquired enough insights into the system to help it cope with its actual and perceived problems.

e) Finally the argument is made that MARC should have tried to play a more direct role in the selection of the new superintendent. Perhaps Hugh Scott would have been chosen in any case and perhaps no one else interested in the job would have been able to do any better, but a least MARC should have determined for itself and for the information of the Board of Education which of the candidates was likely to be most committed to the AAP and most experienced in the administration of such a program. Obviously the new superintendent was crucial to the future of the AAP and not to have taken a greater interest in the selection of this individual was a mistake based on unexceptional motives, but a mistake nonetheless.

There is general agreement among those who wanted to see the AAP succeed that the choice of Hugh Scott as superintendent was a disaster. This was recognized earlier by MARC than by most Washingtonians, but this only complicated the problem of what to do to keep the design from being aborted. If all or most of the plans for implementation had been completed by the time the new superintendent took over it would have been difficult for him to undo what had been done. But this was never a real possibility, given the short time available between adoption of the AAP and the opening of school.

What a MARC presence within the school system might have accomplished is the creation of a pattern of consultation and cooperation which would have been more difficult to break. This is pure conjecture, however, since MARC would undoubtedly have been perceived as an intruder trying to usurp the role of superintendent.

MARC's actual role in the implementation process can be divided into three stages: 1) the summer weeks, 2) the period between the arrival of Scott and the resignation of Clark as consultant to the Board of Education in December 1970, and 3) the final period which lasted from the day Clark resigned to the day a year later when Anita Allen stepped down as president of the Board of Education.

Immediately following the adoption of the AAP, the MARC staff held several meetings in New York and Washington with the acting superintendent, the senior administrators and members of the implementation team. The MARC Washington staff was in almost daily contact with the president of the Board of Education and provided assistance to administrators in working out such problems as heterogeneous grouping, the definition of normalcy, the development of mobilization teams, the review of performance objectives and minimum floors in reading and mathematics, and the creation of subcommittees for administration of the design.

MARC staff was also included in planning sessions between Dr. Benjamin Henley, the acting superintendent, and his staff and in meetings of subcommittees on university liaison, community relations and tutorial programs, and in public meetings on the AAP. In addition, Kenneth Clark and his staff met privately with union officials, city government leaders, newspaper and television reporters, members of the Board of Education, university presidents and many other groups and individuals. The working relationship during the summer months was based on common objectives, mutual respect and friendly cooperation in spite of the fact that the attitude of school administrators and principals was by no means unanimously supportive of the design. Disagreements existed on implementation procedure, on timetables and on personnel.

It is perhaps true that greater MARC involvement might have made the task of the D.C. school administration somewhat easier, but by and large the MARC-school system connection worked well during this preparatory period.

The next phase began with the arrival in Washington of Hugh Scott. His negative attitude and approach towards the AAP, Clark and MARC made it increasingly difficult for MARC to maintain its relationship with the school administration. Scott did not take advantage of the assistance MARC had offered him personally nor did he and his staff avail themselves of MARC as official consultants to the school system. On the contrary the new superintendent became increasingly antagonistic and tried to use Clark as a scapegoat for his own deficiencies. What is more, he discouraged contact between his staff and the MARC staff and was highly suspicious of the relationship between MARC and the Board of Education. Clark tried by various means, including meetings with Scott, to defuse the antagonism and to focus discussion on issues rather than personalities. At the same time, MARC became increasingly critical of bureaucratic delays and of the superintendent's ambiguous approach to implementation. When it finally became clear that the continuing involvement of Clark served no other purpose than to give the opponents of the AAP an excuse for not attacking the real problems facing the program, Clark resigned as official consultant to the Board of Education.

The third phase of MARC's involvement spanned the period between Clark's resignation in December 1970 and the resignation of Anita Allen as president of the Board of Education a year later. During that year MARC tried to provide advice and assistance to all those individuals and groups inside and outside the school system who wanted to see the AAP put into effect. Free of any contractual obligation, the MARC Washington staff served as a primary resource for those members of the Board of Education who supported the design and its objectives. MARC also carefully analyzed the reports prepared by the Superintendent Scott and his staff and, where appropriate, published its findings and conclusions. It was chastised for doing this--a Washington Post editorial on the subject was entitled "The Clark Plan: Non Stop Sniping." But it could be argued to the contrary that MARC and particularly the Washington staff should have taken more rather than less initiative in calling public attention to the weaknesses of the superintendent's program. MARC could have looked ahead and provided facts and figures on the changes which would be required if the AAP was to work.

One can easily argue that MARC should have done more to try to arouse support for the AAP. In particular, MARC should have tried earlier, harder and more consistently to win the confidence and backing of the teachers' union. However, MARC

always considered it to be its function to serve as resource, adviser and consultant to the Board of Education and to school administrators, not as a salesman for the design. It believed that the impetus and drive for implementation of the AAP should come from within the school system itself and from the community, particularly from the parents of public school students.

MARC took too much for granted. It wanted to believe that a 9-to-1 board vote in favor of the project assured solid support for the program and its implementation. It also expected that the parents of students afflicted with ever worsening academic achievement records would speak up on behalf of a program designed to reverse this trend. It hoped that black teachers would welcome an opportunity to help black children acquire the academic tools necessary for success. It assumed that the superintendent and his top administrators would take advantage of the official board policy to bring about improvement in the education provided in the District of Columbia.

MARC had no illusions about the commitment and courage required to put the AAP into effect. But MARC was naive not to prepare adequately for the controversy and opposition which an attempt to change an institution such as education would inevitably engender.

Looking Back

It is now five years later, and to look back on A Possible Reality is more painful than ever. It is difficult to admit to ourselves or to others that a program--initiated with so much hope and such high expectations and designed to make a difference in the lives of tens of thousands of black, city children--should have faded from the scene, leaving hardly a trace.

Some individuals inside and outside the school system tried to assure MARC at various times during the past few years that the AAP was not a total failure, that it had a fallout effect which led to certain changes in programs, procedures and attitudes. They mentioned in particular a greater emphasis by the school system on basic skills and the development of more clearly defined and articulated educational objectives. Finally they say that the concepts that all normal children can learn if they are taught effectively and that schools should be held responsible for students learning have lingered on.

But even if these individuals are right--something that is difficult if not impossible to prove--the AAP as a program for the improvement of the District of Columbia public schools must be pronounced a failure. Some of the reasons for failure have been discussed in this document. But whatever the reasons were, the losers are once again the children who are no better off today than they were five years ago when their desperate plight led to the development of A Possible Reality.